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ABSTRACT

School officials have tried various scheduling strategies to strengthen curriculums. One such strategy, block scheduling, affected the operation of Portsmouth High School, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This status report examines the use of block scheduling over a 2.5 year period and focuses on how this change influenced people, curriculum, test scores, and other areas of school life. It is intended as a working document for the school's faculty and administration as they develop a comprehensive evaluation after several years with block scheduling. The report reviews the literature and sketches a historical perspective about strategies high schools use to prepare adolescents for the future. It is intended to provide information, identify successes, make recommendations for further study, and offer critiques of various aspects of block scheduling. The report focuses on the history of Portsmouth High School and how the process of change was introduced. It examines implications of schedule changes for students and faculty and lists implications of such scheduling for curriculum and instructional methodologies. It offers an assessment of students and block scheduling and provides feedback from students, faculty, and parents. A summary of findings is included. (Contains 50 references.) (RJM)

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BLOCK SCHEDULING
AT
PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

A STATUS REPORT

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Dr. Robert J. Lister
Assistant Principal

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WELCOME BLOCKHEADS

(Sign outside Spring Valley High School in Columbia, South Carolina where a conference on Block Scheduling for teachers was being held.)

Portsmouth High School is entering the third year of Block Scheduling with the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year. Initially when the faculty, students, support staff, parents, school administrators and community members first decided to change from a traditional high school schedule, the discussion centered around how would we feel about the change three years, five years and beyond? What impact for instance would Block Scheduling have on teaching learning? What affect would a change in the schedule have on curriculum? On student learning? On the school atmosphere? After all, many professionals had the "If it ain't broke don't fix it " mindset, and changing the entire high school schedule was taking a "great risk".

What Is A Status Report?

Contained within this report is information about Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School over the past two and a half years. Although this is not a formal evaluation, it is a beginning or "first look" at how, if at all the change in schedule has affected people, curriculum, test scores and other areas of school change. It is intended to be a working document for the faculty and administration and develop a comprehensive evaluation after 3 and 5 years with Block Scheduling. A review of the current literature was researched with educational studies and is integrated into the report. This was done to give the reader a historical perspective about how America's high schools, and Portsmouth High School specifically is changing to better prepare adolescents for the future. It is intended to provide information, identify successes, make recommendations for further study and may even be critical in some areas. This Status Report is a "self portrait" of what is presently happening. Overall, it it intended to provide the reader with a current description of what Block Scheduling presently looks like at Portsmouth High School. Keep in mind, that there are no existing evaluation methods from other schools. Each school must develop their own set of evaluative criteria to assess their own situation taking into consideration the type of Block Schedule being used and the end result of what should be assessed. It is important to keep in mind the high school, the community and the vision each individual situation consists of.

It is expected that this report will be the catalyst for developing additional statistical and narrative ways and data collection for assessing Block Scheduling.

"There is only one thing worse than being blind, and that is to have sight but no vision."

Helen Keller

Acknowledgement

This status report cannot be completed without mentioning the individual who was responsible for having the vision for introducing Block Scheduling to Portsmouth High School, for modeling perseverance through the hundreds of questions that were raised at the many meetings, and for the determination to make it work for the students and faculty.

When he left Portsmouth High School in July 1996, Principal David J. Matthews insured that Block Scheduling was well underway and that it was clear it was making a positive impact on the school environment manifesting itself in many ways through new programs and a changing school climate.

Dave, we all thank you.

Thank You!

This Status report would not have been possible without the many students, teachers, and parents who returned surveys and the individuals who agreed to be interviewed and came forth with ideas, suggestions, and opinions.

Thank you Cindy Lister, Carol Plante, and Jean Frisbee for all your help. It is greatly appreciated.

I would especially like to thank Greg Carey, my friend and mentor, the Assistant Superintendent of the North Colonie Central Schools, Shaker High School, Latham, New York. His help and willingness to engage in lengthy discussions and well thought out suggestions have been valuable to me. His input and suggestions about analyzing statistical data raised my awareness of how this can be used to promote quality. Thanks Greg!

Table Of Contents

Section I.	Portsmouth New Hampshire: Portsmouth High School
Section II.	The Process of Change (How change was introduced)
Section II.	Implications for Students
Section IV.	Implications for Faculty
Section V.	Implications for Curriculum and Instructional Methodologies
Section VI.	Assessment of Students and Block Scheduling
Section VII.	Feedback from Students, Faculty and Parents
Section VIII.	Summary and Future Directions
Section IX.	References
Section X.	Appendices

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"I like your nickname, the Granite state, it shows strength of character, firmness of principle and restraint that have long characterized New Hampshire."

Gerald Ford

Portsmouth, New Hampshire has a population of 25,000 with smaller surrounding suburbs. It is situated on the banks of the Piscataqua River and boasts a historic seaport atmosphere encompassing a major colonial reconstruction known as Strawberry Banke and has a diverse arts community. Additionally, the historic Portsmouth Naval Shipyard continues to employ highly trained workers in the repair and maintenance of atomic submarines. The city of Portsmouth is the second oldest city in New Hampshire. Originally settled in 1623 as Strawberry Banke, Portsmouth was incorporated as a town in 1631. For most of the 17th and 18th centuries, Portsmouth gained notoriety as a major shipbuilding center at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, established in 1800. In 1905, the city gained international recognition with the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth which ended the Russo-Japanese War. Today, great care has been take to preserve the historic flavor of the community as it has grown into the region's largest city, teaming with commercial and cultural activity year-round.

Portsmouth is a dynamic, picturesque, multi-use port four miles inland on the Piscataqua River. In its waters one may find fishing, lobstering, and recreational boating opportunities. Along its banks are fine homes and a historic waterfront that is the center of tourism. Money magazine voted Portsmouth, New Hampshire, one of the best places to live in America in1997. This distinction of being ranked 4 out of 300, was based on the weather, economy, crime rate, and quality of life issues concerned with real estate and education.

Portsmouth Harbour cruise businesses offer tours of the bay, inland waterways and the Isles of Shoals, dining excursions, whale watches, sunset cruises, and fall foliage tours, as well as the opportunity to take part in maritime celebrations that include visits from Class A tall ships and United States and foreign military vessels. Portsmouth is the host of the Children's Day Festival, Market Square Day, The Bow Street Fair, The Portsmouth Jazz Festival, The Winter Solstice Celebration, First Night Portsmouth and many more events through the year. There is the Prescott Arts Festival, the Historic North Church Music Series, The Music Hall, Seacoast Repertory Theatre, The Player's Ring, Pontine Movement Theatre, and Ballet New England to name a few.

Section I. Portsmouth New Hampshire

During the 1970's Portsmouth underwent a culinary revolution that has earned it the distinction of being the restaurant capital of New England. The Portsmouth area offers a limitless variety of dining experiences with nearly 100 restaurants serving everything from American cuisine to most every ethnic specialty possible. Surf and sand are plentiful as well. The Portsmouth area has four state beaches and is within a 30 minute drive of many others. Scenic drives along the rocky coast of both Maine and New Hampshire, and nature tours of the tidal inlets, highlight the areas true natural beauty. Shopping opportunities range from sprawling indoor malls to quaint boutiques, specialty shops and factory outlet stores.

Located less than twenty minutes from the University of New Hampshire in Durham, Portsmouth is less than an hour from Boston, Massachusetts to the south and the White Mountains, lakes and major ski areas, to the north. (Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce)

Portsmouth High School

"Everybody should get a high school education...even if they already know everything."

anonymous

At A Glance
Portsmouth High School

Location:	Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Principal:	Mr. Richard Gremlitz
Assistant Principals:	Dr. Robert Lister
	Ms. Kathleen Metterville
Enrollment, (1996-1997)	1021
American Indian:	2
African American:	36
Hispanic:	17
Asian:	16
White:	950
Total males:	521
Total females:	500
Faculty: 105	105
Support staff:	52
Class ratio:	20-1

Schedule Comparison

7 Period Day	4 Period Day
two-22 minute lunches	one 45 minute lunch
six classes per day	four classes per day
one study hall per day	no study halls
two semesters per year	four quarters per year
three minutes between classes	twelve minutes between classes
six classes per semester	four classes per quarter

Portsmouth High School, home of the "Clippers" is a public, comprehensive high school, grades 9-12 with a current enrollment of approximately 1000 students. Accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NEASC) and the State of New Hampshire, the school serves the towns of Portsmouth, Rye, Greenland, New Castle and Newington, New Hampshire. Portsmouth High School has been recognized for Excellence in Education by the New Hampshire State Department of Education and as an Exemplary Community School by the National Center for Community Education. The Excellence in Education Award is based on the school demonstrating excellence and innovative initiatives in the areas of curriculum, teaching/learning process, student achievement, community/parent involvement, leadership/decision making and school climate. The award for recognition as a Community school is presented as a result of meeting a comprehensive criteria for involvement in community partnerships and collaborations with local businesses and other agencies, being a primary agency responsible for educating all citizens, for viewing students in a holistic manner, having a staff and curriculum focused on helping students become self-confident and self-reliant, and having administrators and board members who advocate, promote and understand the lifelong learning process. Over the years, students have received many awards and recognition for their achievements in academics, athletics, drama and other extra-curricula activities. Most recently, the cafeteria staff at Portsmouth High School was recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture in the category of Regional Best Practices and Innovative Cafeteria Practices. Due to the implementation of Block Scheduling, the cafeteria workers had to adjust how they would feed lunch to the entire school population during the same 45 minute period. This was accomplished by establishing a food court arrangement so students could have a choice of lunch that are located in several areas in and around the cafeteria and foyer. There are many specialized programs and student services to support students with their individual learning needs in a safe and challenging environment. There is a district wide Strategic Plan for the School System and a Mission Statement that guides the educational principles and beliefs (See Appendix). The faculty consists of 48 men and 60 women, 58% of whom hold a Master's degree or higher. Several faculty members have been recognized with grants and awards locally and nationally for their teaching accomplishments. Math and science awards, the Christa McAullife fellowships and recognition for journalism are only a sample of the awards that have been earned by a veteran teaching staff. The faculty has

been the recipient of awards in academics, community involvement and in special needs and technical education. A well-trained support staff of paraprofessionals who are vital to the educational process are available to assist students within the curriculum. In the next few years, the high school will undergo an employment transformation due to the large number of teachers retiring. The majority of the teaching faculty and administrators are active members of professional organizations in their own content areas. Teachers are encouraged to participate in workshops and conferences in their field of expertise. Several have written articles for professional journals and/or made presentations at state and national conferences as part of their individual staff development programs.

Beginning with the 1995-1996 school year all classes began meeting for 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week under the 4X4 plan of Block Scheduling. Each one credit course meets for 90 days (one semester).

The average class has 21 students. Students must complete 4 years of English, 3 years of Math and Science, 3 years of Social Studies, .5 years each of Fine Arts, Health and Computers, and 1 year of Physical Education. Portsmouth High School offers 192 courses within 18 departments with a variety of academic levels of ability. Honors classes are available in English 9, English 10, and English 11, American Studies I and II, Advanced Math, Biology, Chemistry, Pre-Calculus, Spanish V and French V. Advanced Placement Courses are offered in English 12, Modern European History, Calculus, Physics and Computer Science. Admission to Honors and Advanced Placement Courses is based on student application and/or teacher recommendation.

Twenty-four credits are required for the 1998 graduates and beginning with the class of 1999, twenty-six credits. The class of 1999 will be the first graduating class to experience Block Scheduling for all four years. Credits are earned by the quarter. A semester is two consecutive quarters. Therefore, for a semester long course, the student will receive one full credit for passing both quarters or half credit for passing one quarter. The semester grade is determined by the two quarter grades and the semester exam grade. Report cards are issued after each term (four times a year) with mid-term progress report conferences also four times a year half way through each quarter that parents are strongly encouraged to attend an evening meeting to discuss each student's progress so far in each class. Open Houses, Curriculum Nights and other special events are held during the school year to highlight the quality education practices and school events.

The Grading System:

A	Superior work (93-100)
B	Above Average (85-92)
C	Average Work (77-84)
D	Low Pass (70-76)
P	(Above 70) (Credit Given)
F	Failure (Below 70) (No Credit Given)
U	Audit (No Credit Given)
E	Administrative Failure (Excessive Absences)

Plus (+) and minus (-) may be given with A,B,C, and D's.

Class rank is computed for each graduating class at the end of two, three, four, five, six and seven semesters. Students are assigned to levels in English and Social Studies, grades 9-11, by teacher recommendations based on past performance and reading test scores.

The Portsmouth Community is fortunate to have extensive local scholarship support from various sources including funds administered by the Trustees of Trust Funds of the City of Portsmouth, The Foundation for Seacoast Health, The Greater Portsmouth Community Foundation, The Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary Clubs as well as other civic and private groups and individuals. These scholarships are publicized for all students through guidance office announcements, bulletin boards and a local Scholarship Booklet. For the past three years, an average of over $142,000.00 was distributed to approximately 60 seniors from each graduating class. Individual awards ranged from $150.00 to $5000.00 with multiple awards being the rule rather than the exception. The average award for each student was nearly $2,400.00. Some awards are renewable for four or more years. The amount of these local scholarships does not include financial awards made directly to the student from the college or university that they attend, nor does it include the "value" of ROTC Scholarships or attendance at a military academy.

A partial listing of colleges and universities that members of the 1997 graduating class are planning to attend include:

Cornell University	Central Connecticut University
University of Maryland	Tufts University
John Hopkins University	University of New Haven
University of Toledo	Pennsylvania State University
Champlain College	Boston College
University of Hartford	Northeastern University
St. Michael's College	Tulane University
Princeton University	Clark University
Carnegie-Mellon	University of Rhode Island
Wheaton College	Methodist College

A partial listing of colleges and universities that members of the 1997 graduating class are planning to attend include:, continued

Yale College	U.S. Air Force Academy
University of Massachusetts	North Adams State Univeraity
University of Miami	Catholic University of America
Florida State	Union College
Clarkson University	Syracuse University
Buffalo University	Ithaca College
Oswego	Siena College
Lafayette College	Hobart College

Of the 226, 1997 Portsmouth High School graduates:

128	57%	have been accepted to and are planning to attend a 4 year school
22	10%	have been accepted and plan to attend a 2 year school
15	7%	are planning to attend college part-time
3	1%	have been accepted to a four year school and are deferring until 1998
3	1%	have been enlisted in the military and plan to attend
54	23.5%	are planning to work, travel or take time off
1	.4%	plans to attend a prep school

Many opportunities exist for students to become involved in student life at Portsmouth High School:

Clubs/Activities	Sports
Art Club	Football (boys)
Band	Basketball (boys)
Choir	Basketball (girls)
Close Up	Baseball (boys)
Computer Club	Field Hockey (girls)
Drama	Spring Track (boys
French Club	Spring Track (girls)
German Club	Soccer (boys)
Gourmet Club	Soccer (girls)
HERO (Home Economics Related Occupations)	Softball (girls)
Jobs For N.H. Graduates	Golf (boys)
Junior World Council	Fall/Winter Cheerleading (girls)
Latin Club	Winter Track (boys)
Multicultural Club	Winter Track (girls)
National Honor Society	Volleyball (girls)
Olympics Of The Mind	Cross Country (boys)

Many opportunities exist for students to become involved in student life at Portsmouth High School:

Clubs/Activities	Sports
Student Council	Cross Country (girls)
The Paper Clip	Tennis (boys)
Peer Leadership	Tennis (girls)
Peer Mediation	Swimming (boys)
SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving)	Swimming (girls)
Special Olympics	Sailing Club
VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America)	Ski Club
Spanish Club	Ice Hockey
Student Center Recreation Board	
WURD Magazine	
Yearbook	

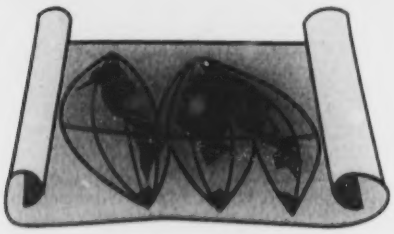
The faculty and staff adhere to the Safe School Legislation that is intended to insure that policies, curriculum, programs, practices and procedures are developed which promote a safe and secure environment. All students are expected to follow school rules and respect others in a climate of learning in a clean nurturing atmosphere. Following the characteristics of the Safe Schools Legislation, Portsmouth High School provides:

- On-going student/staff/faculty/parent/community involvement
- Conflict resolution through peer mediation
- Zero tolerance for drugs/weapons/violence/harassment
- Respect for diversity among all persons
- An environment based on mutual trust and respect

A collaborative protocol has been developed between Portsmouth High School and the Portsmouth Police Department to effectively deal with incidents of harassment, intimidation and serious violations of school rules. The school has a full time School Resource Police Officer in the school who works with teachers, students and the administration emphasizing prevention programs. This officer has previously been the DARE Officer and "Officer Friendly" and is well known to the entire student body from their elementary and middle school experiences.

For those students who have difficulty following school rules and policies and require additional support and encouragement in managing their behaviors, after school detentions, Saturday School, and community service is available to accommodate their individualized needs.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)



"You can't chart a course for the future, if you don't know where you are, or where you've been."

Captain of Picton Castle, Tall Ship

The concept of Block Scheduling was first introduced at least two years before it was implemented at Portsmouth High School. At that time, the principal first discussed a change in the school schedule at a faculty meeting stating that "looking at an alternative schedule could increase the time students spend in class and allow teachers more time to plan". This suggestion came from a recent On-Site Evaluation of Portsmouth High School by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). As a result of the recommendations made by the visiting committee, one of the school goals for the 1992-1993 school year was to "Investigate alternative scheduling, and be prepared to initiate in the 1993-1994 school year". During the 1992-1993 school year a serious investigation was undertaken to look at options within alternative scheduling. In a memo to the Portsmouth Board of Education from Principal David Matthew, dated October 17, 1994, he stated that " the proposed schedule you are viewing tonight is a significant departure from what now exists. I believe that as we move into the 21st century, this schedule is a significant improvement over what we presently have in place. It is a significant departure from the industrial model which our present schedule symbolizes".

During the months of September-December 1995, faculty members were asked to discuss with their colleagues what impact a change might have on curriculum, discipline and school climate. Some teachers attended conferences, others read professional journals, while still others visited schools that were involved in what was becoming known as "Block Scheduling". While few other high schools either had or were investigating alternative scheduling, changing to a new schedule was not without its critics. Professional educators, parents, and students could find many reasons why a new schedule wouldn't work.

On January 10th, 1996, Principal David Matthews, in his presentation to the Portsmouth School Board presented his recommendations for a 4X4 Block Schedule for the high school. After the presentation, School Board member Mr. Bruce Fox stated that he "saw this schedule as an opportunity" although he had concerns about the 1995 graduates and Special Needs students". Board member Dr. Arthur Hilson was concerned about the lunch and what this workday might do to the guidance counselors who, under the recommended Portsmouth Plan could not see students during class periods. Vice Chairperson Mrs. Noel Clews wanted to know what accommodations would be made for students who need to begin preparation for Advanced Placement exams. Mr. Kent Lapage inquired about any scientific data that was available about the Block Schedule.

He was also concerned about class size and the concern teachers might have about losing their jobs. Mr. George Robinson another board member, sounded a resounding "don't delay". Mr. Charles Griffin, Board Chair, articulated his comments about watching the tapes of the meetings from a recent visit from Wasson High School Faculty in Colorado Springs Colorado, which he was unable to attend. He discussed the veteran teaching staff and the change process, that "time was the key", that students can earn more credits and that the superintendent was committed to providing workshops and resources to the staff. He recognized the leadership shown by Principal Matthews in this area and his feeling that Block Scheduling in Portsmouth would meet the demand of more instructional time. Mr. Charlie Vaughn, citing his experience over the years with scheduling in schools, proposed a two year trial and Mrs. Susan Tober reminded the audience that "Portsmouth is pro-active and that we should not postpone Block Scheduling". Mrs. Shawn McEachern stated that she "felt ok with the Block schedule as long as attention was paid to individual students cases regarding courses when necessary".

A handout was prepared and circulated which described different options for Block Scheduling. The option that gained the most attention was the 4X4 plan. This plan seemed the easiest to implement with the maximum benefits. On a vote of 9-0, Block Scheduling was unanimously approved with the need for looking at the results of a change in the schedule after 2-3 years.

Objective #2 in the Portsmouth Strategic Plan also called for ways in which the Semester Block Scheduling support Strategic Planning. It states : "By December 1993, the Portsmouth School District will implement a plan to restructure curriculums/programs, instructional practices and organization of time for instruction to make the most of learning time and promote interdisciplinary studies to enable all students to successfully attain the district's stated outcomes". This will be accomplished by :

- Active Learning
- Increased Learning Time
- Emphasis on Communication (writing and speaking)
- Authentic Assessment
- Portfolio/Exhibitions
- Cooperative/Collaborative Learning
- Internships
- Process/Problem Solving Learning

In developing a structure and purpose of teaching and learning teams, the Implementation Team which is a result of the Strategic Planning Action Teams, is made up of a diverse group of representatives of all schools, administration and the community. In an unpublished White paper, " the desired direction in the Portsmouth School District is formally defined in the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for Excellence and its subsequent revisions, modifications, and products. In reality, the direction of the school

district is the product of on-going dialogue and visioning, a conversation that continually seeks to tease out the implications of the plan for the current situation" (Ott,1996). Another activity that occurred in January prior to Principal Matthews presentation to the school board was a community visit by faculty members from Wasson High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado. For two days, the teachers from Wasson who at this point were in their third year of Block Scheduling spent time in classrooms answering Portsmouth teachers questions about the 4X4 schedule. They also met with students and the administration and sponsored at least two community forums in the evening at the high school auditorium. This was an opportunity for anyone from the community to attend and ask questions. This well advertised event was well attended. Once again, Principal Matthews gave a thirty-minute presentation with ample time for questions.

Throughout the first year, surveys were conducted to gather information from students, staff and parents about the changeover to the 4X4 schedule. Teachers continued to read the current research and attend workshops that became increasingly available. By the second year, the surveys continued, (see Appendixes) the readings continued, and other schools who were beginning their own search for information on Block Scheduling contacted Portsmouth High School for the purpose of visiting to gain as much knowledge and practical information to take back to their own schools. Educators from high schools in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont were interested in visiting classrooms, sitting through a 90 minute class and talking to students. Interestingly enough, it seemed at this point that the Portsmouth teachers themselves became the "experts". At least four of the teachers and administrators were asked to present the Portsmouth Block Schedule at local conferences, a national conference and as part of the curriculum in an Education course at the University of New Hampshire. Portsmouth High School teachers became more involved in "teaching others" within the building especially assisting their colleagues with strategies for planning for a 90 minute class period. It was decided by the administration that we should celebrate the successes in the classroom and acknowledge those educators who are creative in their approach. During the first two year period, funds were set aside for the teachers to work on their own during the summer and be paid on a per diem basis, attend conferences and institutes, and purchase specific materials that may be necessary. Major effort was and continues to be placed on supporting classroom teachers with their curriculum with materials and equipment. In many cases now, the staff development activities involve local teachers as the presenters instead of hiring outside consultants. This has assisted in building community, credibility, and collegiality while at the same time recognizing the efforts of individual faculty members.

This researcher contacted the Departments of Education in the states of Maine, North Carolina, Colorado and Maryland to investigate what support services were available to school districts, information on related Staff Development Programs, and any data specifically concerning the evaluation of how Block Scheduling is evaluated or assessed in each state.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

Many frustrating phone calls were made to reach the appropriate State Department individual who could share no information except to contact local school districts for specifics.

Throughout the research and readings for this status report, documentation was discovered time after time, that the steps that were taken to introduce and initiate change from a traditional school schedule to a Block schedule were consistent with how it was completed in Portsmouth High School and the Portsmouth Community. This validation was very welcome as one of the first steps in assessing Block Scheduling and its effects on teaching and learning.

So why change? Some may ask why move from a traditional seven period day to a four period day. In many instances, a 50 minute period presented a major obstacle to implementing change in the high school. When faculty members were first polled the majority of teachers were not in favor of changing to a four period day. During the months of January to June, teachers attended workshops, visited other schools and were given release time to discuss the concept, adapt curriculum and look at how their instructional methodologies, and how they interacted with students would change. Block Scheduling was not the only area that would eventually be addressed by faculty and staff. The umbrella of School Restructuring was looming overhead and faculty members were being inundated with information about school change, student discipline, total quality management and how this all fit into the Strategic Plan that had been developed by all employees and the community in Portsmouth several years previous.

It was decided that the 7 period day was too rigid, class size was creeping up to numbers of students that teachers had difficulty in reaching some students, that their high school was becoming less personal in a community that prides itself on being friendly and hospitable to all. Teachers did not seem to get to know students as well as they wanted and it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage truancy, absences and tardiness just because of the sheer numbers of students. Study halls were less than effective and not a good use of time for most students. Teachers were asking for more instructional time and fewer disturbances during class time (i.e.. assemblies and students being called to the office etc.). The number of students failing at least one or more of their classes during a semester was seen as unacceptable. Not only were they not experiencing a successful high school career but some students became ineligible for participation in sports teams and other extra curricula activities which was contrary to the message students receive at freshmen orientation each August about the need to get involved in school and become "connected" to the school community. With the emphasis on writing in the district and the message that all teachers are teachers of writing, the quality educational practices that all teachers were aware of as part of their Continuous Improvement Plan (Professional Development) the seven period day did not allow enough flexibility for team teaching, extended labs, cooperative learning or interdisciplinary curriculum.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

The administration at the high school was also concerned with the increasing number of disciplinary referrals to the office, the number of students being sent out of class because of disruptive behavior, the dropout rate and the number of times high risk students could cause havoc somewhere in the school due to the number of times students change classes under the seven period day. Student morale and motivation and the need for adolescents to make good decisions was the topic of several assemblies planned throughout the school year. One administrator described the relationship between some students and teachers a daily game of "cat and mouse in the schoolhouse" which monopolized certain resources and were draining the process. (VonVillas 1996)

Listed in the research as reasons why many schools are moving to a Block Schedule include:

- Fragmented instruction-so many changes during the school day can cause havoc and leaves little time for connections to be made and little time for reflection.
- Impersonal, factory like environments- teachers and students have little time to develop relationships that foster learning. Some teachers see as many as 120 students per day.
- Discipline problems are caused by too many distractions-releasing crowds of teenagers into the hallways every 45 minutes, cutting down on classroom interruptions would allow more time to teach and learn.
- Instructional possibilities are limited-in a 45 minute class, there is barely enough time to start class, end class and expose students to the curriculum.
- Traditional scheduling prohibits varying learning time for students-not all students learn at the same rate or the same way. Some students fall behind and can often become discipline problems thereby reducing the teaching and learning time.

The 4x4 Plan

More than 40 percent of high schools nationwide are involved in some form of Block Scheduling. Currently, the 4X4 semester Block Schedule is the most popular and successful. The block has forced schools to look at using time wisely, developing flexible and creative curricula, and promote a safe and calm school environment for all. The 4X 4 has many advantages over the traditional high school schedule. Portsmouth High School teachers teach three 90 minute classes per day, have a 90 minute planning period and a 45 minute lunch with no extra duties except to monitor a lunch period once every three weeks. Instead of the usual 120-130 students per day, they have 75-90 students. This proposal results in a school day of four instructional blocks of 90 minutes in length. Students, faculty and staff have a common lunchtime of 45 minutes. The school day has been lengthened by 10 minutes. It is now possible for students to graduate with 32 credits instead of 20 required under the traditional seven period day schedule. Not only are more elective courses taken, the number of required courses have been increased.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are expected to take four courses per quarter. Juniors may elect community service learning in place of a class for one quarter. Seniors are expected to take a minimum of three classes per quarter. Thus, instructional time for the average student would increase by 60 minutes per day (six classes x 50 minutes=300 under the traditional schedule Vs 4 classes x 90 minutes = 360 under the Block schedule). Staff teaches no more than three of the four blocks per day. Total teaching time for the day would increase by 20 minutes (5 classes x 50 minutes = 250 minutes under the traditional schedule Vs 3 classes x 90 minutes = 270 minutes with Block Scheduling.

Yearlong courses prior to the block (180 meetings in 50-minute periods) were combined into a single semester (90 meetings of 90 minutes each). Semester length courses are offered in quarter length classes (9 weeks). Students change these classes at the end of each 9-week grading period. Some classes (i.e. AP physics) are scheduled to meet for three-quarters, culminating with an AP exam. There are no study halls. There are fewer students passing each day which reduce fragmentation, tardiness to class, and disruptive behavior. The school climate is much calmer with very few students in the halls during instructional time. The Guidance Department is open during lunch with counselors available for appointments with students and parents. They also spend a great deal of time in classrooms working with individuals and groups of students.

A sample student's schedule would appear as:

	Semester 1		Semester 2	
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
1	Astronomy	Oceanography	American Studies	American Studies
2	Project Adventure	Biology II	Chemistry	Chemistry
3	Accounting	Accounting	English	English
4	Latin II	Latin II	Precalculus	Precalculus

Daily Schedule

Block 1	7:30 – 8:59, 12 minute break
Block 2	9:11 – 10:40
Lunch	10:40 – 11:21
Block 3	11:21 – 12:50, 12 minute break
Block 4	1:02 – 2:31

Benefits of the 4 period day

- Increases instruction by 1 hour
- Provides for students to earn 32 credits
- Students prepare for only 4 courses per quarter
- Teachers teach 3 classes
- Teachers work with 40% fewer students
- Greater opportunities for electives
- Provides for acceleration and remediation
- Number of student passings reduced by 30%
- Increased flexibility-i.e. AP courses
- Opportunity for community apprenticeships/community service
- Fewer classes per day
- Variety of short writing assignments
- Calmer atmosphere, fewer hassles
- Helps facilitate better time-management skills in students
- Necessitates tighter course curriculum and prioritizing content
- Similar to a college schedule
- Provides a structure for interdisciplinary coordination
- Provides more time for teachers to identify student needs
- Student performance, and offer students appropriate accelerated and remedial assistance
- Provides opportunities for in-depth learning
- Teachers may have a common planning time
- Stimulates student thinking by providing time for a variety of learning activities with a class period
- Promotes active rather than passive learning
- More opportunities, more time, more class activities
- More opportunities for re-teaching
- Teaches student organizational skills

Disadvantages

Some teachers report the following list as disadvantages to Block Scheduling even though in the same survey they responded that they would not want to go back to the old schedule of a 7 period day.

- Getting ready for the planning for the first quarter changing from the old schedule was a great deal of work
- More rapid teaching, grading turn around quicker
- Less material covered
- Increased student homework
- Paper load horrendous first semester
- Need to prepare more to allow 3-4 activities per class
- Student absences hurt more
- Special needs students need more accommodations and support
- System demands greater creativity from teachers to vary classroom activities
- Less motivated students get bored and restless if teacher lectures for 90 minutes
- May increase the need for additional faculty

One of the major hurdles Portsmouth High School has had to face is the decrease in the number of students involved in band or choir. The Fine Arts Director states that as of November 1996, the percentage of students in the middle school band is 35%. The following year when those same students enter the ninth grade at the high school, this number drops to 8% (normal percentage of involvement is estimated at 10%). After surveying a number of students who were involved at the middle school and are no longer involved at the high school, they report that they are not in band or choir because they "just couldn't fit it into their schedule". The school administration as of Monday November 10, 1997 at a staff meeting, presented the opportunity of investigating modifications to the present Block Schedule to address issues that have arisen as a result of surveys and other data collected over the past two and a half years. The faculty will be asked to participate in future discussions concerning ways to improve the positive teaching and learning atmosphere at Portsmouth High School as well as ways to conduct continuous evaluation of Block Scheduling in the future.

Block Scheduling Research

It is reported in the research that within two years after a high school moves from a daily, single-period schedule, the data indicate that:

- The number of discipline referrals to the office decreases significantly.
- The number of class tardiness is reduced.
- The number of students on the A, B honor role increases. In the 4x4 plan, there may also be an increase in the number of students making F's.
- Initially, there is a greater stress level for teachers until they learn how to plan in a larger block of time. Eventually, the school environment becomes less stressful for teachers and students.
- The majority of students will say that they like school better.
- Under the 4x4 schedule, students who are at-risk of dropping out of school are more likely to stay in school or return shortly after leaving.
- The number of interdisciplinary teams is likely to increase.
- In some courses, such as mathematics, teachers probably will cover less material,
- However, they report that the material which they do teach is taught better and taught in greater depth. This is more likely the case with the 4x4 plan.
- Attendance with teachers and students increases.
- Students complete more classes with Block Scheduling.
- There is inconsistent data about the amount of homework that is assigned. Some teachers report more, some report less.
- In spite of the challenges of changing to a block schedule, after two years, schools report teachers and students are overwhelmingly positive.
- Foreign language teachers report difficulty covering the equivalent of two classes of material during a 90 minute period.
- There is some evidence that math performance under the block schedule may drop initially and then improve, it is suspected this is a pacing issue of the curriculum.
- As stated on the surveys from parents, teachers, students and the administration, other areas of concern besides the music/band and homework issues are:
    - The number of teachers that still seem to be lecturing for long periods.
    - The length of time of the lunch period and the immature and inappropriate behavior of some students especially in the foyer. For these students, the lunch block is too long.
    - The sequence of math and language classes.
    - The increasing class size due to students taking more classes with no increase in teaching staff.

These five areas are addressed in the summary as recommendations for further study.

One of the areas that some teachers are concerned about is the issue of process Vs content. "We are covering less content," report some teachers. Block Scheduling cannot be the only factor influencing this. In New Hampshire for example, the state curriculum guidelines which is driving curriculum alignment calls for open ended questions as part of student assessment. This in itself, may contribute to the change in the amount of coverage a teacher is able to put forth. Math teachers for instance may be concerned that during a 90 minute block, they are responsible for teaching two classes of work. A recent International Math and Science Study in its final recommendations call for a curriculum with depth, not breadth. Eighth graders in the United States rank below the international average in mathematics. The study goes on to describe the failure of educators to coordinate their efforts between math and science. One of the major findings of the study showed that math teachers in the U.S. have a typical goal of teaching students how to do something, while math teachers in other countries such as Japan and Germany help students understand and apply mathematical concepts. The study cites the math classes and curriculum in the U.S. not as challenging and stimulating as other countries.

The other major concern of teachers is the issue of sequencing of courses. The curriculum should insure that there are no gaps in scheduling courses such as Algebra I and Algebra II. "To work best under Block Scheduling, the math curriculum may need to be adapted to reduce redundancy between courses and to cover fewer topics in more depth with each course" (Kramer, 1997). Teachers under the block are not only being required to change how they teach but what they teach.

There are some schools that operate under the Block system that give the students the opportunity to graduate in three years instead of four. This is due to administrators and schools setting a specific number of credits needed for graduation feeling that when these requirements are met students can exit the high school program. Portsmouth High School does not encourage or even allow students to leave high school after three years believing that they need additional courses and in some cases emotional maturity to be better prepared for college. There are still other high schools that are investigating the possibility of using the block and the increased number of courses required to consider the program that provides three years of high school and a year of college. In their view, this was the best way to insure that students used the additional time rather than graduate in three years.

In a recent conversation with an Admissions Director at the University of New Hampshire, the following question was asked: When students from a high school with Block Scheduling apply to UNH, do you think they are better prepared and are viewed as a better candidate because they have had more courses than a more traditional high school? Mr. Andy Colby, an Admissions Director, stated that he feels that students from

high schools with the block take advantage of additional courses that will better prepare them for college and want a high school transcript that is attractive to the college or university. He states that there is a noticeable difference in students because the increase in courses presents a better picture of the student's academic ability, performance, and involvement in school. This, along with previous test scores, a personal interview and a description of involvement in school and community activities provide information for the decision to accept a student to the University. Mr. Colby stated the only drawback he observes with Block Scheduling is those schools who present very confusing program descriptions of quarter and semester courses to the University and those students who present a transcript for admission in January and seem to not perform as well during the last quarter because they have been accepted to college by this time and do not feel it is important to continue to do well because they already have so many credits. This group of students seem to be few although they do attract attention from the Admissions Office as students that may need monitoring. Overall, Mr. Colby feels that there is an advantage in the eyes of Admissions for students who are applying from high schools with Block Scheduling. Ironically, Mr Colby himself is a past graduate of Portsmouth High School under the traditional 7 period day and is able to compare his own academic experience to the students he meets as an Admissions Officer at the University.

Because the Block Schedule as described in this status report is relatively new, there is little data available to measure its effectiveness. The advantages and disadvantages are presented as a result of surveying all constituents involved but those opponents of Block Scheduling are still concerned with the long range effects on student performance, curriculum and acquisition of basic skills. Yes, Block Scheduling is a hot topic in school reform with a growing number of high schools replacing the traditional six or seven 45-minute period classes per day with fewer classes that meet longer. Schools are reporting decreased academic problems because there is more time to teach and work with individuals and groups, a lower dropout rate and increases in grades and grade point averages. Many students feel that when they miss a class they miss a great deal of material and find it more difficult to catch up. This would obviously be even more difficult for students who already have attendance and/or academic problems. Many schools using the Block have made accommodations for this through the development and availability of specialized tutoring, extra make-up after school or other ways that will assist students and promote success. In order to change this around, schools must look at how they are preparing students for the twenty-first century. Areas that need to be addressed include: improvement of instruction, examination of the core curriculum, class size, graduation requirements, community partnerships, school culture and staff development. Experience has shown that school improvement is possible if there is visionary leadership and a common goal and vision.

A high school is a measure of education in the community. No matter how good school programs at the elementary and middle levels, ultimately a community is judged by its high school. Change, however, may be easier to implement at the elementary and middle levels, where teachers are more child-centered and therefore, more responsive to new

initiatives. High school teachers who are content driven on the other hand, tend to be more cynical about modifications that may represent a fashionable theory that threatens a content area which defines their existence. The high schools that have surfaced as most improved are those who have overhauled their curricula so students have to work harder toward high expectations. Successful schools are those where teachers work closely together, staff development programs are appropriate for the challenges teachers have to face, and community partnerships have been developed with the philosophy that the children are the responsibility of the entire community not just the school as an isolated entity. In these schools, the teachers experience a high level of job satisfaction, the students feel connected to the school and show their pride through school spirit and there is a high level of parental involvement because they feel welcome and want to contribute to the overall school program. Student performance is also increased greatly as seen in test scores, higher attendance rates and fewer disciplinary problems.

There are inherent barriers to school change. (Tewel 1995), describes these barriers as teachers who describe their jobs as a series of tasks they perform each day such as "I teach science" or " take attendance" making little mention of the greater purpose of teaching. Teachers need to feel as though they are a significant part of the organization. There has to be high expectations with these expectations well defined. They need access to the materials and equipment necessary to deliver an innovative and creative curriculum. One science teacher described his experience with a seven period day prior to the 4X4 plan as going through the day only having contact with teenagers and no interaction with adults because time just didn't allow it. Institutional barriers also exist that can prevent restructuring. If the high school is seen as an isolated entity from the rest of the system or there is a lack of support from the administration, morale problems and negative attitudes may develop. This provides a certain challenge for principals and places them in a new leadership role. Now the principal becomes a coach and cheerleader in the instructional role while still wearing a management hat. The effects of Total Quality Management on teaching and learning are multiple. All improvements should be linked to teaching and learning. A focus on faculty-wide thinking and planning sessions, organizing new decision making processes, problem solving and evaluation techniques should occur. Once in place, opportunities for continued direction of the "vision" must be available during the Implementation Time.

School reform is more than altering structure and curriculum. Schools with high student achievement share an organizational culture in which administrators, staff members and students agree on a common purpose for educational outcomes and undertake cooperative team efforts to reach these goals (Kaplan and Evans 1997).

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

Goals of the High School Scheduling Reform Movement :

This reform effort is attempting to create high school schedules which are designed to:

- Reduce the number of class changes
- Reduce the duplication of curriculum
- Reduce the number of classes teachers need to prepare for
- Reduce the number of tests, projects and assignments students must address during a term or semester
- Allow teachers blocks of time to encourage active teaching strategies and greater student involvement
- Allow more time for learning without lowering standards and punishing students who need additional time to learn material

School restructuring introduces fundamental change in one or all of three key areas : programs and services for students, roles and relationships, rules and accountability. Student learning outcomes and teaching and learning environments are a focus for change. Students and teachers should be empowered to experience success. This can be accomplished through high expectations for everyone with a common vision. Up to now, the A word, "accountability" has been ignored both in terms of teachers and students as well as the community at large.

Movement to a change in the high school schedule can facilitate change in other areas. More time will allow questions to be answered that are concerned with what and how students should be learning, what the desired outcomes are, and who the students really are. Issues around the learning environment, classroom management staff development and curriculum that can be addressed. Students are not the only victims of outdated schedule practices. Scheduling can also contribute to the creation of a school that does not take good care of its teachers. Long hours in self-contained classrooms, with little relief or revitalization through professional development, contributes to deepening demoralization and makes it difficult for teachers to view themselves as members of the professional community (Rosenholtz 1989).

(Winn, Menlove and Zsiray 1997) state that there is a clear relationship between time and learning. Changing the way time is used has an impact on everything that happens at school. Critical changes must not be mandated but must evolve, both top-down and bottom-up.

(Senge 1990) believes that successful learning organizations develop a way of thinking about change through reflection and team learning until a vision and shared understanding of complex issues evolve. A suggested strategy for accomplishing this is to:

1. Develop a process and a leadership team
2. Set a purpose for what is to be accomplished
3. Conduct research, inventories and/or questionnaires
4. Visit other programs, talk to professionals
5. Develop a criteria for what the schedule should include
6. Review existing models
7. Reflect on the information gathered and how it meets the needs of your school.

As schools consider moving to Block Scheduling, many have difficulty obtaining the necessary support to change. (Fitzpatrick and Mowers 1997) state in their article about the success of Block Scheduling that "Gaining support from all the major stakeholders is critical". One strategy in gaining support for changes in the schedule as well as other restructuring efforts is to invent ways to make the high school more personal. Breaking Ranks : Changing An American Institution (NASSP 1996) identifies making the school a more personal place. With the growing impact of information and communications technologies, the importance of schools as human places becomes all the more significant. Schools must provide stability and safety in a world that is ever more complicated. It is the human touch embedded in a personalized and caring framework that will ultimately promote the kind of thinking and learning essential to the success of out students in the twenty-first century (Mackin 1996). A teacher's classroom leadership has been identified as the real center of meaningful school change.

When looking at whether or not something like Block Scheduling should be implemented, schools need to examine what resources exist in the high school, what the organizational culture is, what effects a new schedule will have on academic achievement and instructional methodologies, the student-teacher relationships, and student behavior. Schools should not overlook or underestimate the power of the student body. Individuals generally commit themselves to the goals of an institution or activity when their input is valued and solicited. Breaking Ranks (NASSP 1996) note that " students who have a role in the setting of learning goals will feel a vested interest in meeting those goals" (p.23).

Any Assistant Principal in charge of discipline will verify a preponderance of disciplinary referrals made as a result of transitions during the school day when large numbers of students spill into the hallways between and at the end of classes, at lunch time in the cafeteria, and in locker rooms. With the decrease in the number of times students change classes during the day, there is almost always a noticeable effect on a school's disciplinary climate. The relationship between learning and scheduled time in America's schools was the focus of a National Education Commission. It was reported that "the

degree to which today's American school is controlled by the dynamics of clock and calendar is surprising, even to people who understand school operations"(National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994, p.7). Prior to the present "Block Scheduling", reform movement, there was no typical high school schedule even though some commonalties did exist. The 1960's and 1970's saw the inception of the "Flexible Modular Schedule" which also was not uniform in all high schools. Schools across America especially in certain states are moving very quickly in some cases to Block Scheduling and away from the six, seven, or eight period day because it is felt that they:

- Exacerbate discipline problems
- Contribute to the impersonal nature of high schools
- Offers fewer opportunities for students who want to take a variety of courses
- Limit instructional possibilities for teachers
- Do not permit flexible time for teaching and learning
- Are not always user-friendly workplaces for teachers (Canady and Rettig 1995)

Throughout the research, individuals in schools who are involved in Block Scheduling provide certain cautions before a school or community adopts a change in the high school schedule.

- Block Scheduling is a means, not an end. A clear direction should be determined prior to a change in the schedule which without the involvement of all constituents could cause a distraction in the curriculum
- "Do Your Homework". Read articles, talk to teachers in your curriculum area, visit other schools and have students talk to students. If you consider yourself a Community School, involve the community in the information sharing.
- Honor the concerns of teachers. How will this change their teaching style, how will they adapt the curriculum?
- Provide opportunities for parents to have their questions answered. Will this schedule be a benefit for my child who wants to go to college? What about the sequencing of courses? What if my son doesn't have Spanish for two semesters? What effect can I expect on my daughter's SAT scores?
- Give students opportunities to have their concerns addressed. Will I be bored in 90-minute classes? How will this prepare me for college?
- From the very beginning, keep accurate narrative accounts of the positive aspects of the change in the schedule as well as any "bugs" that need to discussed by staff. This will assist in the design of your evaluation or assessment of Block Scheduling as you progress through each school year. Reflect on issues and focus some discussion on issues at staff meetings.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

In order to better understand the need for change in high school's across America, it is important to note that education goals have been set at the federal, state and local levels. President Clinton and the Department of Education have established the following goals as National Standards of Academic Excellence to improve education.

- Set rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math to make sure our children master the basics.
- Make sure there is a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom.
- Help every student to read independently and well by the end of the 3rd grade.
- Expand Head Start and challenge parents to get involved early in their children's learning.
- Expand school choice and accountability in public education.
- Make sure our schools are safe, disciplined and drug free, and instill basic American values.
- Modernize school buildings and support school construction.
- Open the doors of colleges to all who work hard and make the grade, and make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as high school.
- Help adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant.
- Connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and help all students become technologically literate.

The New Hampshire State Board of Education Goals have been developed to:

- Improve instruction and learning through the New Hampshire Education Educational Improvement and Assessment Program (NHEIAP)
- Improve and increase the use of technology as an educational tool in our schools.
- Promote effectiveness and cost efficiency of Special Education.
- Increase involvement of businesses in partnership with schools in a sustained way.
- Enhance a learning environment, which is healthy, safe and orderly.
- Share and communicate achievements in education.

The Portsmouth School Department has developed goals for the district as part of the Goals 2000 proposal to the state which was approved in September 1997 for funding specific initiatives that will impact all faculty and students in the city's schools. Each builds on the Strategic Plan and is intended to meet the goal of: "By the year 2000, student learning and achievement in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science, as measured by the NHEIAP and local assessments, will increase significantly".

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

This goal will be accomplished through the implementation of three initiatives:

1. Building-Based Teaching and Learning Teams whose responsibility to plan and implement specific curricula and instructional strategies based on district and building priorities, develop a building vision for assisting all students to achieve high standards, and share in the data based decision making of the school as it pursues its plan for excellence in education.

2. Curriculum alignment with the State's Curriculum Frameworks to ensure congruence among curriculum, instruction, and assessment and to guarantee challenging standards for all students.

3. Utilize the concept of "Quality Schools," based on Dr. William Glasser's work, to motivate all students to perform and produce high quality work.

The Portsmouth High School goals and initiatives, that include Block Scheduling, Curriculum alignment in the content areas and continued staff development opportunities will be a direct result of the Goals 2000 proposal that reflect the school district's goals.

On October 15, 1997, New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen sponsored "The Governor's Education Summit" in Bedford, New Hampshire at the Wayfarer Inn Conference Center. The Summit, attended by 400 educators, parents, school board members and high school students focused on seven topics that included: Early Childhood Intervention, Safe and Orderly Schools, Linking Learning to Work, Maintaining the Competitive Edge, Teacher Preparation and Development, How Technology Enhances Learning and the Use of Assessment to Improve the Schools. Governor Shaheen in her opening remarks at the conference stated that "we are doing great things in New Hampshire and, that New Hampshire ranks 2nd in SAT scores". Governor Shaheen cited the average SAT scores are 511 for verbal, the highest in 26 years, and 80% of all high school age students are graduating which is the highest percentage ever. She cited the increased number of high school graduates attending college, the exemplary educational practices in schools with specific examples across the state, and the Goals 2000 and School To Work Initiatives that are providing unlimited opportunities for students. She called for the need to re-write curriculums, addressing the state assessments and raising the standards for students and teachers in the state's public schools. In a brief personal conversation with the Governor at the conference, even though she did not mention Block Scheduling specifically, she did acknowledge the need to continue developing innovative initiatives concerned with school reform. One statement that the Governor made that appeared to impact the conference participants was that " 60% of the jobs that the present Kindergarten class will have when they graduate from high school have not yet been created". She stated that 33% of New Hampshire adults hold some type of college degree which is above the national average of 26%. She called for a continued effort to fund education at higher levels and advocated the need to link education at the high school and college to the work world. One school board

member has told the Governor that "teachers are being asked to do the impossible" for which the Governor called for the public to support teachers in the classrooms in the schools. It is important to note in this report, that this is the first time in 22 years a Governor in New Hampshire has called an Education Summit to the magnitude that occurred on October 15th and is expected to have a major impact on future discussions concerning education in New Hampshire.

There have been two very important Education Reports that have had serious impact on education in America. First, the Nation At Risk Report was a result of the Commission on Excellence in Education in August 1981. This report has been hailed by some as only second to the launching of Sputnik by the Russians in 1957, having a profound impact on education in the United States. The commission was created, as a result of the concern that there was widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss with our educational system. The driving force behind each recommendation of the commission is the single minded consideration of what is best for the education of the country's teenagers, the lifeblood of the nation, as they are poised on the brink of adulthood. The most often repeated phrase that came out of the report and caused a furor of activity was "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war". (Breaking ranks, 1981, p.5)

In an effort to help the reader of this Status report on Block Scheduling, excerpts of the two reports are included. This will provide evidence of how school reform has come about as a result of the reports and set the direction or vision for educators in America's high schools.

Portsmouth High School and Shaker High School in Latham, New York have been involved in a collaborative relationship with several innovative projects and initiatives including analyzing and comparison of statistical data for this status report.

A Nation At Risk

The National Commission on Excellence in Education in the report provides information on the indicators of risk, and their findings and recommendations in the areas of :

1. Curriculum Content
2. Expectations
3. Time
4. Teaching

Certain indicators of the risk of America's students included:

- About 13 percent of all 17 year olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent.
- Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests is now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched.
- Over half of the population of gifted students do not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school.
- Nearly 40 percent of 17 year olds cannot draw inferences from written material; only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.
- There was a steady decline in science achievement scores of U.S. 17 year olds as measured by national assessments of science in 1969, 1973, and 1977.
- Average tested achievement of students graduating from college is also lower.
- Business and military leaders complain that they are required to spend millions of dollars on costly remedial education and training programs in such basic skills as reading, writing, spelling and computation.
- Computers and computer-controlled equipment are penetrating every aspect of our lives, homes, factories and offices.
- One estimate indicates that by the turn of the century, millions of jobs will involve laser technology and robotics.
- Technology is radically transforming a host of other occupations. They include health care, medical science, energy production, food processing, construction, and the building, repair and the maintenance of sophisticated scientific, educational, military and industrial equipment.

The findings of the Commission after examining the patterns of high school students concluded:

- In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can be easily mistaken for the main courses.
- The curriculum is a smorgasbord of courses.
- Twenty-five percent of the credits earned by the general track high school students are in physical education, work experience outside the school, remedial English and mathematics, and personal service and development courses, such as training for adulthood and marriage.
- The amount of homework for high school seniors has decreased (two-thirds report less than 1 hour a night).
- Thirty-five states require only 1 year of mathematics, and thirty-six require 1 year of science for a diploma.

- In 13 states, 50 percent of the units required for high school graduation may be electives chosen by the student.
- Minimum competency examinations are now required in 37 states. As the minimum tends to become the maximum, some believe this lowers the educational standards for all.
- Too few experienced teachers and scholars are involved writing textbooks.
- Many books do not challenge the students to whom they are assigned.
- Expenditures for textbooks and other instructional materials have declined by 50 percent over the past 17 years.
- High school students in England spend 8 hours a day in school, 220 days per year. In the United States, by contrast, the typical day lasts 6 hours and the school year is 180 days.
- In many schools, the time learning how to cook and drive counts as much toward a high school diploma as the time spent studying mathematics, English, Chemistry, U.S. History or Biology.
- A California study of classrooms found that because of poor management of classroom time, some elementary students received only one-fifth of the instruction others received in reading comprehension.
- In most schools, the teaching of study skills is haphazard and unplanned. Consequently, many students complete high school and enter college without disciplined and systematic study habits.
- Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college classes.
- A survey of 1350 institutions training teachers, indicated that 41 percent of elementary teacher candidates time is spent in education courses, which reduces the amount of time available for subject matter courses.
- The shortage of teachers in mathematics and sciences is severe.

The recommendations of the Commission upon completion of the study are based on the beliefs that anyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, and that a solid high school education is within the reach of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with the skills required for new careers and for citizenship. (A Nation At Risk, 1981,p.24)

Recommendations:

- That all high school graduation requirements be strengthened.
- The teaching of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Computer Sciences equip students with basic skills and challenging curricula opportunities.
- Achieve a proficiency in Foreign Languages.
- The high school curriculum should provide rigorous programs in fine and performing

arts and vocational education.

- The curriculum is crucial, in the eight grades leading to the high school years.
- Grades should be indicators of academic achievement so they can be relied on as evidence of a student's readiness for further study.
- Four-year colleges and universities should raise their admissions requirements.
- Standardized tests of achievement should be administered at major transition points.
- Textbooks and other tools of learning should be upgraded to assure more rigorous content.
- New instructional materials should reflect the most current applications of technology in appropriate curriculum areas.
- Students in high schools should be assigned far more homework than now is the case.
- Instruction in effective study and work skills, which are essential if school and independent time is to be used efficiently.
- School districts and State legislatures should strongly consider 7-hour school days, as well as a 200-to 220-day school year.
- The time available for learning should be expended through better classroom management and organization of the school day.
- The burden on teachers for maintaining discipline should be reduced through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently, and by considering alternative classrooms, programs, and schools to meet the need of continually disruptive students.
- Attendance policies with clear incentives and sanctions should be used to reduce the amount of time lost through student absenteeism and tardiness.
- Administrative burdens on the teacher and related intrusions into the school day should be reduced to add time for teaching and learning.
- Placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age.
- Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards.
- Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and be professionally competitive, market-sensitive and performance-based.
- School boards should adopt an 11-month contract for teachers. This would insure time for curriculum and professional development.
- School boards, administrators and teachers should cooperate to develop a career ladder for teachers that distinguish among the beginning instructor, the experienced teacher and the master teacher.
- Incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage.
- Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in

supervising teachers during their probationary years.

- Principals and Superintendents must play a crucial leadership role in developing school and community support for school reforms
- State and local officials, including school board members, governors, and legislators have the primary responsibility for financing and governing schools.
- The Federal Government, in cooperation with States and localities, should help meet the needs of key groups of students such as the gifted and talented, disadvantaged and the handicapped.
- It is believed the Federal Governments role is to protect the constitutional and civil rights of students and school personnel, collecting data, supporting curriculum improvement and research on teaching and learning, and the management of schools.
- The Federal Government has the primary responsibility to identify the national interest in education.
- The Commission calls upon educators, parents and public officials to assist in bringing about educational reform proposed in the report, "A Nation At Risk".

Breaking Ranks:

A Report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advanced of teaching on the high school of the 21st century.

The Commission on the Advancement of Teaching makes the statement that "High school lays the foundation for what Americans become, and what Americans become shapes the high school that serves the succeeding generations. Now, buffeted by powerful and unsettling winds, both the high school and the country are searching for stability and renewal. As a pivotal institution in the lives of young people, the high school can serve as a linchpin in efforts to improve the American condition, touching the lives of almost every teenager and, consequently, contributing to the betterment of the country"(Breaking Ranks, 1981, p.3).

The central aspects of teaching and learning must provide the focus for high school reform. The curriculum, instructional strategies, the school environment, appropriate use of technology, and the way the school organizes itself and how time is used and assessment and accountability directly determines the quality and success of the high school program.

Breaking Ranks, which was two years in the making outlines recommendation in nine areas that represent a vision for America's high schools. They are:

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

1. High school is, above all else, a learning community and each school must commit itself to expecting demonstrated academic achievement for every student in accord with standards that can stand up to national scrutiny.
2. High school must function as a transitional experience, getting each student ready for the next stage of life, whatever it may be for that individual, with the understanding that, ultimately, each person needs to earn a living.
3. High school must be a gateway to multiple options.
4. High school must prepare each student to be a lifelong learner.
5. High school must provide an underpinning for good sportsmanship and for full participation in the life of a democracy.
6. High school must play a role in the personal development of young people as social beings who have needs beyond those that are strictly academic.
7. High school must lay the foundation for students to be able to participate comfortably in an increasingly technological society.
8. High school must equip young people for life in a country and a world in which interdependency will link their destiny to that of others, however different those others may be from them.
9. High school must be an institution that unabashedly advocated in behalf of young people.

The areas of renewal for which recommendations are made are:

- Curriculum: Offering essential knowledge, integrating it, and making connections to life.
- Instructional Strategies: Engaging students in their own learning.
- School environment: creating a climate conducive to teaching and leaning.
- Technology: Making way for electronic learning.
- Organization and Time: restructuring space and time for a more flexible education.
- Assessment and Accountability: Individual, collective, and institutional outcomes.
- Professional Support: Helping school staff member fulfill their potential.
- Diversity: Finding strength in differences.
- Governance: Streamlining the operations of schools and school districts.
- Resources: Providing for sufficiency.
- Ties to higher education: Seeking unity in purpose.
- Relationships: Reaching out to form alliances in behalf of students.
- Leadership; Attributes that need nourishing.

Recommendations

Curriculum:

1. Each high school community will identify a set of essential leanings-above all, in literature and language, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts-which students must demonstrate achievement in order to graduate.
2. The high school will integrate its curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.
3. Teachers will design work for students that is of high enough quality to engage them, cause them to persist, and, when successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of leanings, skills, and abilities valued by society.
4. The content of the curriculum, where practical, will connect itself to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.
5. Assessment of student learning will align itself with the curriculum so that students' progress is measured by what is taught.
6. Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.
7. The high school will promote co-curricular activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.
8. A high school will reach out to the elementary and middle level schools from which it draws students to help those schools understand what kind of foundation students need for success in high school and to respond to the needs of the lower schools for policies at the high school that reinforce earlier education.

Engaging Students In Their Own Learning:

1. Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.
2. Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.
3. Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and as facilitators of learning to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.
4. Teachers will teach in ways that help students to develop into competent problem solvers and critical thinkers.
5. Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.

6. Teachers will utilize technology in their instruction in ways that improve student learning.
7. Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process itself.

Create A Climate Conducive To Teaching And Learning:

1. The high school community, which cannot be value-neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.
2. Experiences in high school will acknowledge multiple talents and ways of learning to help students achieve the meaningful success that leads to further achievement.
3. Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.
4. The school will accord meaningful roles in the decision-making process to students, parents, and members of the staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
5. In order to maintain a positive environment, each high school will ensure that any student who brings a weapon into a high school, sells illegal drugs in the school, or behaves violently in the school will immediately forfeit the right to attend that particular school.
6. Agreements that school systems negotiate with teachers, principals, and other personnel will be accompanied by a Student Impact Statement to help warrant that contracts and other agreements consider the best interests of students.
7. Every school system will ensure that facilities used by its high schools are clean, attractive, safe, and well equipped.

Make Way For Electronic Learning:

1. School leaders will work with others to develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for use of technology in the school. The plan, including a code of ethics, will allow for ongoing changes in technology and adapt itself to continual changes in the school program.
2. Schools will make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize the learning process.
3. High schools will equip individual classrooms with the technology necessary to prepare students for life in the 21st century.
4. Budget allocations will be adequate to maintain current technology needs, including sufficient funds to permit access to all students and to use technology to deliver student services.
5. Technology will be a key part of both initial and continuing teacher education to

provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to integrate technology into the curriculum and to adapt it to instructional strategies. To achieve these ends, school districts will hire teachers who can use technology to obtain information and who can incorporate technology into teaching and learning.

6. Every high school will designate a technology resource person to provide technical assistance and to consult with the staff to assist them in finding the people, information, and materials that they need to make best use of technology.

Restructuring Space And Time For A More Flexible Education:

1. High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.
2. Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.
3. High schools will develop flexible scheduling that allows for more varied uses of time in order to meet the requirements of the core curriculum.
4. The Carnegie unit will be redefined or replaced so that high schools no longer equate seat time with learning.
5. The high school will reorganize the traditional departmental structure to meet the needs of a more integrated curriculum.
6. Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping without restricting the range of courses and learning experience it offers.
7. The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.
8. Schools will operate on a 12-month basis to provide more time for professional staff development, collegial planning, and the added instruction needed to promote better student learning.

Individual, Collective, And Institutional Outcomes:

1. The high school will assess the academic progress of students in a variety of ways so that a clear and valid picture emerges of what they know and are able to do.
2. The school will review each student's Personal Progress Plan continually and indicate the extent of progress toward graduation and post secondary transition options.
3. High Schools will guarantee that students can meet performance standards in entry-level jobs. Recent graduates who fail to meet these basic standards will have the opportunity to return to school for additional studies.
4. Each high school will report annually to the community, disclosing school wide assessment results and other pertinent information.
5. At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a Public Description of the school, a requirement that could be met in

conjunction with the evaluations of state, regional, and other accrediting groups.

6. Students will evaluate teachers and instruction on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways, providing regular feedback with regard to how effectively student learning goals are met.
7. Supervision of teachers will be thorough and ongoing, making use of the expertise of master teachers as well as administrators.
8. Principals and other administrators will use the highest standards of teaching as the criteria against which to evaluate teachers for determining their continued employment.
9. The high school staff will assess the principal and the administrative team's performance periodically in a variety of ways, providing regular feedback with regard to how effectively school goals are met.

Helping School Staff Members Fulfill Their Potential:

1. Every high school will become a learning community for teachers and for the other professionals it employs.
2. Each educator will create a Personal Learning Plan that addresses his or her need to grow, stressing knowledge and skills related to improved student learning.
3. The high school-with the help of the school district-will provide adequate funding, time, and other resources to ensure that professional development is a continuous, ongoing process.
4. The principal of a high school, as a model for the staff, will pursue his or her own ongoing professional growth while helping to lead the professional development for the entire school.
5. The support staffs of a high school-secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, and others-will also be encouraged and assisted in their own career growth and drawn into the larger school community as adults who can promote the well being of students.

Finding Strength In Differences:

1. The principal, the school community, and the school board will promote policies, practices, and decisions that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and within the mission of teaching and learning.
2. The curriculum will expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.
3. The teachers, adjunct teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, volunteers, and members of the community who staff the high school will represent a wide array of talents, perspectives, and backgrounds.
4. The school will offer its staff substantive, ongoing professional development to help them deal with issues of diversity.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

Streamlining The Operations Of Schools And School Districts:

1. Boards of education will essentially follow the model of corporate boards in business and industry. They will take responsibility for adopting goals, policies, and standards of accountability; for approving the district's budget; and for hiring and monitoring the superintendent, who will be free to run day-to-day operations.
2. The superintendent will work collaboratively to build a vision for improving teaching and learning and attaining educational goals. He or she will educate the community about the needs of schools and nurture the development of shared leadership throughout the district.
3. Each high school will establish a site council to work with the principal in reaching decisions to make the school an effective organization for student learning.

Seeking Unity In Purpose:

1. High schools will engage in structured and formal communication with higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning.
2. Secondary and higher education will collaboratively develop new and consistent standards concerning college admissions requirements.
3. High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.
4. High schools will hire educators who have prepared for teaching by studying in high schools that model best practice.
5. Research by those connected with colleges of education should, whenever possible, concern itself with issues of teaching and learning affecting children in elementary and secondary schools in order to help improve practice.
6. High schools will hire only those teachers whose classroom preparation is provided in colleges and universities in which the teacher education program bears the stamp of external accreditation.

Reaching Out To Form Alliances In Behalf Of Students:

1. A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals.
2. The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students' education.
3. High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of health and social services for youth.

4. The high school will develop political and financial relationships with individuals and organizations in the community to foster ongoing support for education programs and policies.
5. The high school will foster productive business partnerships that support and supplement educational programs.
6. High schools will form partnerships with agencies for youths that support and supplement the regular programs of the schools.
7. The high school will require each student to participate in a service program in the community or in the school itself that has educational value.

Attributes That Need Nourishing:

1. The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning.
2. Selection of high school principals will be based on qualities of leadership rooted in established knowledge and skills that result in dedication to good instructional practice and learning.
3. Current principals will build and refine the skills and knowledge required to lead and manage change.
4. The principal will foster an atmosphere that encourages teachers to take risks to meet the needs of students.
5. The superintendent and other central office administrators, as well as school board members, will exercise leadership in support of the planning, implementation, and long-range momentum of improvement at the school level.
6. Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.
7. The leadership of students, parents, and others in the school community will enhance the work of the principal, who should recognize this potential for leadership by nurturing and supporting it.

(Breaking Ranks,1996, p.11)

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

Theodore Sizer's Coalition For Essential School offers a structure to help schools change with the school reform movement. The Coalition is guided by nine principles that call for schools to:

1. Set clear and simple goals about the intellectual skills and knowledge to be mastered by all students.
2. Reduce student-teacher loads.
3. Personalize teaching and curricula.
4. Make student work the center of classroom activity.
5. Adopt interdisciplinary approaches.
6. Award diplomas based on students' exhibition on their learning.
7. Adopt a "less is more" approach by concentrating on fewer subjects in greater depth.
8. Create an atmosphere of trust and respect for the school, faculty, students, and parents.
9. Accomplish such changes with no more than a ten percent increase in the school's budget.

(Sizer 1996)

There are many other examples of restructuring initiatives. The Coalition of Essential Schools, The Goals 2000: Educate America Act provides a framework for meeting a set of national goals, and several states that had restructuring efforts in individual schools and school districts. In other reports written on school reform by John Goodlad entitled a Place Called School: Prospects For The Future, and Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School, written by Ted Sizer call for school improvement in the areas of teaching and learning. Still others such as Tomorrow's Teachers, published in 1986 by the Holmes Group, and A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, also published by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession in 1986, call for reforming teacher preparation programs so teachers have a command of their subject matter.

In an article by Cunningham and Nogle (1996) they state that in implementing Block Scheduling, there are key elements in any restructuring effort. They are:

1. Teacher input and ownership.
2. Student and parent input and ownership.
3. Adequate staff development.
4. Time for planning.
5. Opportunities to share concerns and successes.
6. Evaluation of student and teacher success.

Section II. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: (How change was introduced)

The New Hampshire School Administrators Association, in their Position Paper on Adequate Public Education of June 1995, outline the goals adopted as a result of the "New Hampshire Governor's Task Force on Education": "Student Performance Outcomes", "National Goals 2000: Educate America Act", and the New Hampshire Business and Industry Association Report on "What They Should Be Able To Do". These outcomes define an adequate public education; the task before us is to implement change, provide funds to support the implementation, and then assess performance.

The recommendations made by the New Hampshire School Administrators Association are:

1. Establish a set of expected student performance outcomes with a system of assessment.
2. Re-organize the current administrative structure and recognize the importance of teachers.
3. Build strong community constituencies and coalitions with dynamic leadership.
4. Give every child in New Hampshire the best possible opportunity to succeed in life.

In order to succeed at these goals, an implementation plan must be put into place with the closest monitoring.

Section III. Implications For Students

"Teaching children to count is as important as teaching them what counts."

anonymous

One of the outcomes of changing to Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School was to have students who believe their accomplishments are the result of hard work.

Student Benefits Of The 4X4 Schedule:

The Portsmouth High School Plan is expected to produce the following outcomes for students:

- Improvement in academic success and achievement
- Decline in drop-out rate
- Increased graduation rate
- Reduction in student stress-greater opportunities to take elective courses
- Fewer number of courses taken at one time
- Opportunity to earn more credits per year
- Increased opportunity for more individualized attention and instruction due to smaller classes of longer duration and varied instructional strategies
- Fewer books and materials for students to manage
- Opportunities for students to socialize with friends during a longer lunch time
- Greater involvement of students in extra-curricula/school sponsored activities through scheduling meetings during the lunch period
- Opportunities to make up any classes failed during the school year instead of attending a remedial summer school program
- Increased academic achievement resulting from earlier intervention and increased feedback from teachers using varied evaluation strategies in assessing student learning

Graduation Requirements:

The number of credits required for graduation will increase due to students ability to take additional courses. Beginning with the class of 1999, twenty-six credits will be required for graduation. (prior number required for all classes was 20). The class of 2000 will be required to have thirty-two credits for graduation. Credits will be adjusted in the following manner:

Class of 1997	22
Class of 1998	24
Class of 1999	26

Beginning with the class of 1999, course requirements as described in individual students four year educational plan will increase.

English	4 credits
Math	3 credits
Science	3 credits
Social Studies	3 credits
Health	.5 credits
Fine Arts	.5 credits
Physical Education	1 credits
Computer Awareness	.5 credits
Computer Application	.5 credits
Subtotal	**16 credits**
Electives	**10 credits**

Minimum required for graduation is 26 credits

Section IV. Implications For Faculty

"A teacher affects eternity. You can never tell where his influence stops."

Henry Adams

One of the expectations for faculty was that they would use different instructional practices when teaching students for a 90 minute period. No teacher was expected to just lecture for the entire class time. They were asked to use at least three different approaches during the class time. They could for instance, lecture, involve students in groups and use technology. They could initiate a lab time, individual conferencing or have students make presentations. Whatever the case, the expectation was that the instructor would act as coach and/or facilitator and teach the material in a way that students would be able to relate the information learned to practical application.

Regarding the need for Staff Development for Portsmouth High School when Block Scheduling was first discussed and during the past 2 and a half years it has been in place, the faculty has been very vocal from the beginning that they want the opportunity to learn from each other and not have outside presenters flown in from all the corners of the earth to teach them how to work with students. They requested the opportunity to attend workshops in their own content areas, visit colleagues in other schools who are on Block Scheduling and be allowed to set goals as part of their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) that relate to planning curriculum and developing new instructional techniques. As a requirement of CIP, which is a district-wide initiative, they are also involved in support groups that meet on a regular basis to discuss the professional goals they have set for themselves. Their supervisors at the high school are working with teachers to insure that these goals are appropriate, are attainable and that the teachers are including the district's Quality Practices outlined in the Strategic Plan in their goals.

Regarding the leadership of principals, in addition to the administrative tasks, supporting teachers and monitoring students, there are increasing responsibilities for developing successful collaborations with the private sector. Schools in some communities refer to the student and parents euphemistically as "customers" and have learned it is important to communicate in order to focus on their needs. A faculty committed early on the improvement of teaching and learning provides guidance and direction about the restructuring efforts, which must be linked to the district's Strategic Plan. A change in scheduling can be used to facilitate other changes which have encouraged higher expectations for students, educators, and parents, especially during the study and investigative period of Block Scheduling. All parties must have a vested interest.

Section V. Implications For Curriculum And Instructional Methodologies

"Education is not preparation for life... Education is life itself."..

John Dewey

The high school curriculum has sometimes been referred to as a patchwork curriculum that lacks any kind of substance or coherence. In recent years, due to national studies and programs like The Coalition Of Essential Schools at Brown University as well as pressure from individual states, there has been a call to define what is meant by an effective high school. In a text entitled, "History of Education", the changing school curriculum is addressed. " The curriculum is the child's introduction to life, as schooling is the preparation for it (Monroe 1906). Even in the early days of education, the curriculum was seen as a basic focus or a direction for students. What should be taught in school has always been the focus of what the needs of society are. Some will argue however, that during recent periods of time schools have been lax when it comes to providing the most up to date skills. The typical high school structure inhibits collaborative curriculum planning and teaching.

"Let's prepare students for the 21st Century" has even been seen on bumper stickers in one state. The *"A"* word, *"accountability"* is being heard more and more on a regular basis in the educational community. How we schedule our adolescents, our young adults in the high school will determine how they respond to the expectations waiting for them when they graduate. If we expect great things from them, we as educators, as professionals must "Stand and Deliver".

Besides all the research and recent recommendations to personalize the high school as the most important reform, we must develop ways to provide new instructional methodologies for students who learn in different ways.

Block Scheduling does affect the way teachers teach in addition to what they will teach. In order to see positive results of a change in the schedule over time, each teacher must examine their own instructional methodologies. Any teacher who thinks they can lecture for 90 minutes day after day is destined for trouble. We have already established through experience that merely extending the class period from 45 minutes to 90 minutes

expecting to do the "same old, same old" is not effective. Teachers will be ineffective in the block if two formally 45-minute long lessons are simply stacked on top of each other to form a 90-minute lesson. Concepts and classroom activities must be reorganized within the new time frame. Cooperative learning strategies can provide different modes of learning. Lecture is still important, but it is not all that is done: shorter times of lecture are interrupted by having students work in pairs or small groups, discuss ideas together, check one another's understanding and share conclusions with other groups and pairs in the classroom (Strebe,1996, p.65). Some teachers may establish learning centers in the classroom and provide opportunities for computation, investigation and higher order thinking skill development. The teachers at Portsmouth High are expected to vary their instructional methods, to look at the learning styles of students and examine their own teaching styles. After they have accomplished this over a sustained period of time, the next logical step will be to look at new ways of developing interdisciplinary curriculum experiences, and troubleshooting any potential problems. Prior to the implementation of Block Scheduling, teachers and administrators should be concerned about the methods of instruction as well as other issues such as student absences, discipline, motivation and assessment. The Block Schedule can present opportunities for the development of integrative learning, can effectively meet the needs of Special Needs learners, create opportunities for research and projects, and create conditions for collaborative learning. There can also be opportunities for concept development and critical thinking skill development. There should be a focus on understanding, not just covering material. The importance of the principal, as an educational leader, is vital to any change process within a school. Integration of two or more subject areas may be an appropriate component of the school's program of studies. This will promote opportunities for success for students with all ability levels.

In addition to teachers utilizing varied instructional methodologies and strategies within the curriculum, they need to integrate learning styles and use current research on left brain/right brain and multiple intelligence's. Multiple intelligence theory is concerned with differences in the process of learning, whereas learning styles theory centers on the content and products of learning (Silver, Strong, Perini 1997). Teachers should have access to professional journals and be encouraged to use the research in developing new teaching techniques.

Examples of effective teaching strategies that can be used in the classroom during a 90-minute period are:

1. At the beginning of class allow for journal entries, trivia questions, time to check homework etc.
2. Allow students to move freely around room for a defined period of time for specific activities.
3. Assign students in-groups to complete work.
4. Use technology that is available.

5. Use peer teaching.
6. Use discovery and creativity with projects through research and class presentations.
7. Use debates, role playing and group discussions challenging students with questions.
8. Integrate your curriculum material with others promoting team teaching.
9. Use learning journals to keep track of new concepts.
10. Use handouts, guided notes or a syllabus to summarize what students have learned.
11. Use active questioning which is an excellent way to assess whether or not students understand the material.
12. Use cooperative learning techniques.
13. Move outside the classroom for some learning activities.
14. Use writing groups or other special projects that will encourage group and individual learning and creativity.
15. Use role playing, simulations and case studies.

No matter what activity a teacher engages students in, they should be relevant, be connected to the curriculum and continuously engage the learner in active learning. Taking into consideration varied learning styles and the research on multiple intelligence, practice and experience has shown that individuals learn:

10%	of what they read
20%	of what they hear
30%	of what they see
50%	of what they hear and see
70%	of what is said
90%	of what is said and done

What this tells us is, as students, we learn and retain more information when we receive and participate in applying new skills learned. Many curriculum activities can be developed with this information in mind.

The School Staff Development Program needs to reflect the changes in Teaching and Learning as a result of Block Scheduling. Money, resources and materials need to be readily available to teachers. There is a call to depart from traditional classroom instruction in some cases. Teachers are called upon to stimulate ideas and teach new ways to communicate. Adolescents need varied approaches to learning and create new solutions to problems, discuss, analyze, express opinions and receive feedback about learning. Teaching is a demanding profession and will be become even more demanding in the future.

Section V. Implications For Curriculum And Instructional Methodologies

In a recent conference on Block Scheduling in Albany New York sponsored by the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA), an emphasis was placed on the staff development needs of teachers in schools where Block Scheduling was being considered. Teachers in the audience identified the need to develop standards, new curriculum and expectations for students. They should be allowed to experiment, communicate and collaborate with colleagues. When a discussion began concerning teacher performance, one educator reminded everyone to ask themselves the following question: Would you want someone like you to be your child's teacher? Students need exposure to the best teachers. Teachers who are creative, innovative, good role models and those who encourage learning and self-esteem in a safe and nurturing classroom environment experience positive job satisfaction. New strategies have been developed for improving teacher recruitment and in the way students are taught in college and university teacher training programs. They too must change and adapt to meet the needs of providing the appropriate training for classroom teachers if they are be successful in schools. Policies to support high quality teaching need to be enacted and followed. Bringing the teaching profession up to par with others, such as law and medicine should be the goal of each state. This Status Report does not take into consideration the necessity to develop appropriate strategies for students who will make the transition from middle to high school. Many times in some school districts, there are inconsistencies in scheduling and orientation to the high school and in expectations.

Section VI. Assessment of Students and Block Scheduling

"Knowledge is Power."

Francis Bacon

All high schools are looking for new ways to assess student performance and achievement and evaluate the curriculum. There are studies that look at the effects of Block Scheduling on academic achievement indicated by student's grade point average, report cards and tracking the number of A's and F's earned (Hottenstein and Malatesta, 1993, Hart, 1994; Buckman, King and Ryan, 1995; Edwards, 1995; Schoenstein, 1997). A study by Whitla et al (1992) examined the effects of Block Scheduling on standardized achievement tests. The study found no statistical difference in scores in one school through a pilot study. Only a few studies have examined the effects of Block Scheduling on specific content areas. Reid (1995) reported improvements in writing ability in Block Scheduled English classes, and Lockwood's 1995 study of Block Scheduling on mathematics found no significant differences in achievement in algebra or geometry as measured by high school subject tests and standardized algebra or geometry tests (Eineder and Bishop 1997). This paper is intended to begin to establish a format for evaluating the effectiveness of Block Scheduling in Portsmouth High School.

Those Advocates of Block Scheduling cite that extended class periods provide more in class time for student activities and more opportunities for teachers to use various instructional methodologies. Interviews with teachers and surveys of parents, teachers and students have shown that it is true that teachers who work in a school with a Block Schedule are more likely to be more creative, use different methods of teaching and look more toward integrative or interdisciplinary curriculum and individualized instruction.

So why evaluate Block Scheduling? The major question is whether or not changing the high school schedule to Block Scheduling has had an effect on teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is defined as the relationship between the effectiveness of instructional methodologies and the pedagogies and student performance. Also considered are the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents in the effectiveness of the learning process.

To translate this into practical terminology and identify categories specific to Block Scheduling in Portsmouth High School, the following is submitted:

1. Concerning student-teacher relationships, teachers under the block system appear to have fewer students because they are teaching fewer classes. Some communities feel that if they move to Block Scheduling, they will be able to "lay off" some teachers because students will be taking few classes. This is not true. In fact, under the 4X4 schedule, students will be taking more classes during their four year career which means that after a brief period of time (usually after the first school year) additional sections of classes are needed as well as more elective courses as well as more teachers.
2. Block Scheduling looks very appealing when smaller class size is discussed as one of the benefits. Proceed with caution here. If additional courses are not added or additional teachers are not available, class size increases. This becomes a problem immediately in certain subject areas such as mathematics, science and languages. This affects morale, increases the number of potential behavior problems and leads to dissatisfaction with Block Scheduling. It may cause teachers to revert back to lecturing for 90 minutes, which is not the purpose of the change in scheduling.
3. Additional materials may be necessary for certain classes. This is especially true in classes where there are labs. At least one science teacher has cited the need for double the amount of chemicals for demonstrations and double the number of cats used for dissection because what used to be a semester course is now a quarter course which means there are twice as many students taking the course. Other subject areas are also in need of additional classroom supplies, materials and resources in order to enhance the curriculum.
4. Teachers have cited the Block schedule as way to provide more opportunities for collaborative learning to develop better interpersonal relationships with peers because of a smaller class size and a chance to work with individual students. One of the biggest criticisms of public schools in America is that there is limited direct access to students because of class size. If you were to look at almost any private high school, you would notice that they pride themselves on small class size where everyone contributes during class. Students support one another; there is a welcoming feeling, and there is respect of everyone. This results in fewer students feeling the need to act out because they cannot compete in the class and are experiencing failure. Similar as those in private school classrooms can be attained if class size under Block Scheduling is kept to a reasonable number. Teachers also see this as a major way administrators provide support to the classroom professionals, which improves the morale of faculty and staff.

5. Portsmouth High School boasts the lowest dropout rate in New Hampshire. This can be attributed to the many specialized programs available in the school and the outreach effort put forth by the faculty and staff. Students who have educational, psychological, or medical needs are accommodated by faculty and programs that fill a myriad of needs. There are also many community services that work cooperatively with the schools to provide assistance for individuals with an emphasis on the family. Prior to the implementation of Block Scheduling, even with these services, the high school dropout rate was 3.41%. Entering the third year of Block Scheduling, the dropout rate is 2.83%. This figure is compared to a statewide rate of 4.89%. There are many community services and agencies that support individuals who are at high risk of not completing school.

Portsmouth High School Drop Data

	# Drop Outs	#DIFF STU	Drop Out Rate*
1990/1991	30	1083	2.77%
1991/1992	27	946	2.85%
1992/1993	24	918	2.61%
1993/1994	33	968	3.41%
1994/1995	27	993	2.72%
1995/1996	25	998	2.51%
1996/1997	30	1061	2.83%

* The average of the first 4 years prior to Block Scheduling is 2.91%. The average of the second three years is 2.68%. This shows a 9.2% improvement in the dropout rate.

6. Student behavior has changed. The assistant principals at Portsmouth High School report that since changing to Block Scheduling, fewer students are being sent to the office for disciplinary reasons during class time. Teachers who now have the students for a 90 minute period with smaller class size are establishing classroom rules during the first few days and discussing the consequences for inappropriate behavior which is based on academic consequences related to a student's grade. This is preferred over the practice of sending students to the office for detentions or other discipline. Teachers report they are more in control of their own classroom management and use the assistant principals for prevention, and positive support which also allows students to see the assistant principals in a different role. One of the major factors that contribute to fewer behavior problems and a more positive school climate is that students are making fewer transitions or movement as a student body and less time in the hallways during the school day. Students are less likely to be late for class which allows fewer opportunities for confrontations that may lead to physical or verbal fighting. Tardiness to class is a pressing concern of teachers at Portsmouth High School.

Section VI. Assessment of Students and Block Scheduling

	* 7 Period Day		Block Scheduling	
Reasons For Suspension:	**1993/1994**	**1994/1995**	**1995/1996**	**1996/1997**
Alcohol Use	10	4	1	1
Defiant Behavior	20	56	12	17
Destruction of School Property	4	0	0	0
Disruptive Behavior	14	5	8	5
Drug Use	0	3	6	7
Excessive Tardiness	1	3	0	3
Fighting **	26	20	27	27
Lack of Co-operation	18	6	1	4
Leaving School	69	49	52	40
Roaming	2	0	0	1
Rude or Discourteous	19	19	4	7
Skipping Class	142	81	37	88
Skipping Office Detention	29	83	86	39
Skipping Teacher Detention	0	5	5	2
Smoking	200	198	191	189
Stealing Money	0	5	5	2
Theft of Property	5	1	0	1
Chewing Tobacco	12	0	0	0
Truancy	20	42	20	44
Unacceptable Language	17	32	20	14
Unacceptable Language to Staff	9	27	9	15
Violation of School Rules	15	13	11	14
Skipping Saturday School	0	0	19	49

* The differences/discrepancies in the statistics reported for 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 reflect changes in administration and teachers required daily notification of students absent from class through a new recording system period by period, and heightened accountability of all staff to monitor students.

** All Students are referred to peer mediation and/or for disciplinary action.

At Portsmouth High School, the number of students who are skipping classes has not decreased as anticipated since the inception of Block Scheduling. Those students who previously skipped classes and wandered the building, blending with those students who were traveling from one destination to another legitimately now are noticed and challenged by faculty who are keeping a watchful eye for students in the hallways. With

the decrease in the number of class changes, visits to the nurses office, guidance and other areas where adolescents tend to their business, those students who chose to skip class "stick out like sore thumbs" because of their decreased numbers.

7. The image of the school administrators has changed. They are now more able to be visual by visiting classrooms, meeting with students and observing teachers on a more regular basis. They, as well as classroom teachers are more able to engage in preventative activities and are viewed differently because they do not spend most of the day in the office reprimanding students. They are more likely to contact and meet with parents on a regular basis. Their leadership style has changed drastically and they are more able to work on ways to make the high school a community through vision and supervision.

Other benchmarks that the Portsmouth Community has for Block Scheduling include:

1. Anticipating an increase in the number of students who sign up for and take the SAT exams.
2. Anticipating an increase in the number of students who take the Advanced Placement courses and (AP) exams.
3. Positive comments from College Admissions Directors who cite any differences they see in PHS seniors applying to college. For instance, is a senior from PHS any better prepared or a more attractive college candidate after being involved in Block Scheduling? Is it because they were able to take more high school courses than before Block Scheduling? Is it because the courses were more in-depth or extensive?
4. A decrease in the high school dropout rate creating less of a burden on the community.
5. An increase in the number of students signing up to take Advanced Placement courses such as Calculus and Physics.

Portsmouth High School is still in search of new ways to evaluate Block Scheduling. Sufficient data is being collected to assist in this process. There are Objective criteria or benchmarks that are being compiled to assess whether Block Scheduling has merit.

They include:

- Quarterly student grades
- Dropout rates
- Student discipline referrals
- College and university admissions to both 4 year and 2 year programs
- Any change in test scores on SAT's and AP exams (Even though the New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program, NHEIAP, began in 1996, statistics will be kept to watch for trends).

Subjective criteria and benchmarks will include:

- Student, teacher and parent surveys
- Change in community support
- Staff development of teachers
- Changes in curriculum development/practices

The basic approach to evaluating Block Scheduling is to look at a "process" and "product" evaluation. The process will investigate the ways in which all constituents worked cooperatively to adapt Block Scheduling to an individual high school. The product evaluation simply provides the actual schedule change and describes the way in which over time, it will impact teaching and learning.

In 1993, the New Hampshire State Legislature passed legislation that mandates students in grades 3 be tested in English/language arts and math. Students in grades 6 and 10 are also evaluated in English/language arts, math, social studies and science. Concurrent to this, curriculum frameworks were published in each area. The tests are administered in May and results available the following October. There are four proficiency levels that students can obtain. Described here are the proficiency levels for English/language arts. Social studies, math and science differ to some degree but also have four levels of proficiency. (NH-NHEIAP 1996).

Advanced

Students at this level demonstrate a broad and in-depth understanding of a wide range of literacy, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They make complex connections between and among ideas and concepts in materials they read, hear, and view. They analyze texts and make critical judgments. They provide extensive evidence for inferences and interpretations. They persuasively present, explain, and defend positions. Their writing shows logic, clarity, organization, fluency and style. They use language to communicate effectively.

Proficient

Students at this level demonstrate a solid understanding of a wide range of literacy, narrative, factual, informational and practical works. They make meaningful connections between and among ideas and concepts in materials they read, hear, and view. They evaluate and organize information, make and communicate informed judgments, and provide evidence for inferences and interpretations. Their writing is clear, logical, and shows evidence of fluency and style. They effectively control the mechanics of language including spelling, capitalization, grammar, and punctuation.

Basic

Students at this level demonstrate a general understanding of literacy, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They form reasoned conclusions and make straightforward connections among ideas and concepts. They use information obtained by reading, viewing, and listening to solve problems and complete tasks. Their writing successfully communicates straightforward ideas; but is limited in organization, focus, and details. They make errors in the mechanics of language.

Novice

Students at this level demonstrate some understanding of literacy, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They recognize clearly-stated information in materials they read, hear, and view. They display a rudimentary ability to use language to solve problem and complete well-defined tasks. Their writing shows limited focus, organization, and development and may contain errors in the use of convenient language, mechanics, and sentence structure.

A comparison of test scores for 10th graders for the 1996 and 1997 testing at Portsmouth High School are as follows:

Comparison of 1996 V 1997 NHEIAP

	10th LA 96	10th LA 97	10th Math 96	10th Math 97	10th Science 96	10th Science 97	10th Soc. 96	10th Soc. 97
Advanced	1	3	5	3	0	0	0	1
Proficient	9	13	16	29	21	16	9	19
Basic	55	62	30	27	22	29	21	28
Novice	31	12	45	31	52	45	63	43
Index	37.5	47	36	45.5	32	30.5	19.5	34

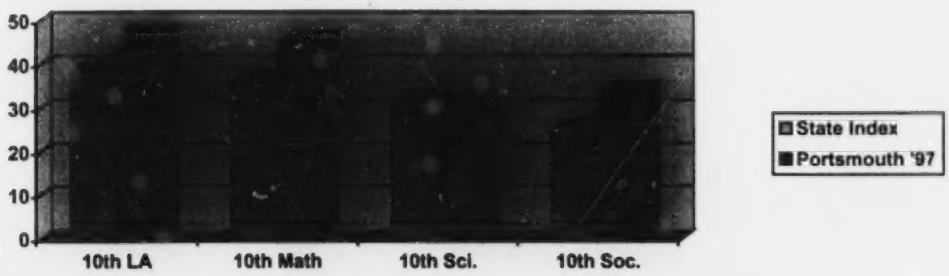
The results of this testing for Portsmouth High School 10th graders shows that:

- -Scores were increased in 3 out of 4 areas from 1996 to 1997 (all except science)
- -The index scores exceed the state average in 3 subject areas* (all except science)
- -System-wide, the largest gain was in grade 10 social studies
- -The number of novice scores decreased in all areas
- -On the 1996 test students exceeded the state average on 2 out of 34 open response items; on the 1997 test, students exceeded the state average on 23 out of 34 open response items

*** The index score is calculated by adding the total of the advanced score plus the proficient score plus half of the basic score.**

Curriculum frameworks have been developed which stress higher order thinking skills such as problem solving and analyzing, and application of content and knowledge. Teachers and administrators have been involved in the next step which is to align the school curriculum in each area with the frameworks. English and math are close to completion, social studies is under way and science is just beginning.

Comparison of Portsmouth and State Index Scores – 1997



	10th LA	10th Math	10th Science	10th Soc. Studies
State Index	39	36.5	32	25.5
Portsmouth 97	47	45.5	30.5	34
Variance	8	9	-1.5	8.5

Maintaining high scores on the state assessments in the future is very important to the high school and the school district overall. It is believed that the knowledge learned and the way in which it is acquired will contribute significantly to higher student performance through other assessments during the student's school career. It is believed that aligning the curriculum with the state assessment frameworks will increase SAT scores over time.

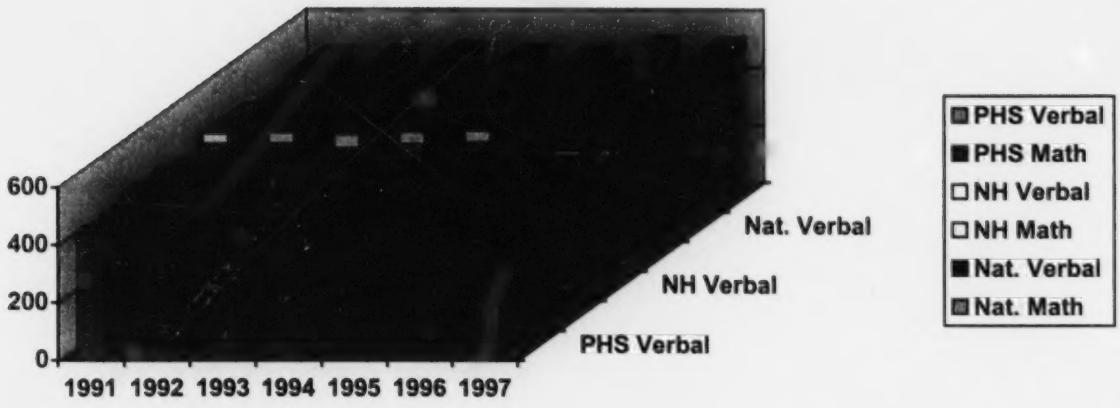
SAT scores for students are charted here to give the reader information concerning this assessment. The College Board states that although SAT scores reflect the amount of academic study students have undertaken in high school, they are not a direct measure of the effectiveness of school curriculum or teaching; other measures may exist for those purposes. The proportion of students taking the test is the most important factor for a state, school or district to consider in attempting to interpret SAT scores. For most schools, annual score changes are not as significant as trends over time.

SAT Statistics

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	SAT's Re-centered 1996	SAT's Re-centered 1997
# Total Students	267	210	208	159	195	198	237
# Taking Test	176	117	136	111	111	99	172
% Taking Test	65.9	55.7	65.3	69.8	56.9	50	72.5
Mean Verbal/Math							
Portsmouth High School	443/472(-3/-9)*	430/473 (-10/-10)	416/461 (-8/-17)	433/476 (-5/-10)	440/486 (-4/-5)	517/507 (-3/-7)	493/505 (-29/-31)
New Hampshire	440/481	440/485	424/478	438/486	444/491	520/514	522/536
National	442/474	423/476	442/487	423/479	428/482	517/507	507/503

* Indicates the difference between Portsmouth and the State

Verbal/Math Scores



The SAT scores for Portsmouth show an increase in the percentage of students taking the test. As with all other assessments, students should be encouraged to take the test. Valuable information can be obtained from results that will affect curriculum development, scheduling students, class size and issues around personnel. SAT scores

should only be looked at as a single piece of information about student performance and ability. Colleges and universities take into consideration other variables when considering a student for admission. Unfortunately, each year when SAT scores are released and reported in the local newspaper, they are ranked in order of scores only comparing communities and school districts. The reports do not take into consideration the number of students who take the test, demographics or other issues that can influence scores. It is not appropriate for the high school curriculum to be revised based solely on SAT scores. It is however, to the benefit of those students who will be taking the SAT tests to be exposed to a curriculum that is aligned with the curriculum frameworks. These new formats are being developed to increase the number of required courses in math, science, social studies and English as well as to continue to improve the writing performance of students. The number of students taking the SAT's in 1997 was increased by 50 %.

Class of 1997 SAT Statistics (N = 172)

Range	Verbal	Math
600 – 800	32	23
500 – 599	54	59
400 – 499	61	60
Below 400	25	30
Portsmouth	M = 502	M = 492
National	M = 505	M = 511
New Hampshire	M =521	M =518

Institutionalizing the Writing Assessment for all students in the Portsmouth Schools is a major initiative in the district. The 1996 local and state assessments will be used to improve students' writing performance. This in addition to other assessment techniques will be valuable in determining student growth.

Advanced Placement scores are charted, on the next page, to present to the reader information about how AP scores are distributed during the years of 1991-1997 (1996 scores are not available).

Advance Placement Test Scores

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Calculus AB							
# Taking Test	15	14	11	21	8	N/A*	2
# Passing (3 or better)	10	9	6	10	5	N/A*	2
Calculus BC							
# Taking Test	0	3	0	0	9	N/A*	5
# Passing (3 or better)	0	2	0	0	7	N/A*	2
Physics							
# Taking Test	9	11	8	11	13	N/A*	3
# Passing (3 or better)	3	5	3	4	7	N/A*	2
English Literature							
# Taking Test	13	9	14	12	20	N/A*	18
# Passing (3 or better)	11	8	11	11	16	N/A*	15
Science							
# Taking Test	0	0	0	0	0	N/A*	0
# Passing (3 or better)	0	0	0	0	0	N/A*	0
Spanish							
# Taking Test	0	2	2	1	3	N/A*	0
# Passing (3 or better)	0	2	0	1	2	N/A*	0
European History							
# Taking Test	9	11	8	14	12	N/A*	0
# Passing (3 or better)	9	9	6	9	9	N/A*	0
Computer Science A							
# Taking Test	11	7	0	2	2	N/A*	0
# Passing (3 or better)	8	4	0	1	1	N/A*	0

Advance Placement Test Scores

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Computer Science AB							
# Taking Test	11	2	4	3	8	N/A*	2
# Passing (3 or better)	7	2	4	2	6	N/A*	2
French							
# Taking Test	1	0	0	0	0	N/A*	0
# Passing (3 or better)	1	0	0	0	0	N/A*	0

* not available

There appear to be inconsistencies in the number of sudents year to year who take specific AP courses. The reasons why some AP courses have fewer students enrolled year to year, should be examined. After looking at the AP scores presented, it is apparent that more students should be encouraged to take AP courses as well as the exam. At the present time, the exam is not required but encouraged. The data shows that AP courses may restrict students in choosing other courses.

It is still too early to determine the imperical effectiveness of Block Scheduling. Just now as we enter the third year of Block Scheduling are we able to begin to analyze data to make and support assumptions using the testing data to determine what impact curriculum alignment, different teaching methodologies, or a change in the high school schedule has had in increasing student learning or performance. As evidenced in the previous sections of this report, these are teacher reports, student responses and other " soft measures" which begin to support our new delivery model of Block Scheduling. Certainly, we anticipate the New Hampshire Curriculum Assessments to improve each year. We will continue to encourage more students to sign up for Advanced Placement courses and take the AP exams. Other evaluative techniques are being used by classroom teachers as discussed previously such as portfolios and authentic assessment.

As this Status Report is being written, there is a great debate brewing in our nation's capital concerning the issue of national testing of children in America's public schools. The greatest amount of discussion presently, revolves around who will be involved in developing, administering and evaluating a national test. The debate is on-going as states continue to assess students in their own ways.

Section VII. Feedback From Students, Faculty, and Parents

"Those who dare to teach, must never cease to learn."

Plato

Students, faculty and parents have been involved in the design and implementation of Block Scheduling since it was first introduced in 1993. Each group has been asked to respond to surveys, be active members of committees and task forces, students have written articles for the school newspaper; The Paper Clip, have discussed areas of concern and issues in classrooms inviting administrators, and have interviewed visitors to Portsmouth High School from other schools who are considering a change in their own traditional schedule to some form of the Block. Teachers have provided feedback to the administration and have had an on-going dialog through staff meetings, Department Meetings and the Principal's Advisory Council (PAC). They have used the issue of Block Scheduling to set professional goals and discuss it as part of their Support Groups that meet regularly as a requirement of the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) for professional development. Parents have sponsored forums for anyone concerned through the Parents and Teachers Together (PATT) meetings held monthly at the high school which is a forum to discuss issues and acquire information about the school, students and educational practices.

A survey for each group, students, faculty and parents was conducted in September 1997. The purpose of these surveys was to enlist feedback from each group to provide documentation on how each group felt Block Scheduling was working at Portsmouth High School as we entered the third year. This information will be used to further assess the effectiveness of Block Scheduling. In a similar survey conducted in April 1996, each of the three groups was asked to compare Block Scheduling to the traditional seven period day that existed. The results of the survey can be found in the Appendices. In the most recent survey, the respondents are not asked to compare, only to assess how students are learning now into the third year. Sample copies of the surveys can also be found in the appendices. A list of selected comments is summarized from each survey.

STUDENTS:

A sample of students across the curriculum was conducted from various courses and grades at Portsmouth High School in October 1997. Three hundred thirty-four (334) surveys were collected with responses to the questions below. A partial list of responses of students is provided for each question:

1. **Because of Block Scheduling, I feel I am learning more in each subject.**

1. Not really	2. Somewhat	3. Yes	4. Definitely
18%	35%	36%	10%

2. **Because of Block Scheduling, my teachers are using different instructional styles such as simulations, student presentations, special projects and other ways that help me learn the material better.**

1. Not really	2. Somewhat	3. Yes	4. Definitely
17.5%	41%	30%	10.5%

3. **I feel that I am doing better in school because I have 4 subjects at a time instead of 6.**

1. Not really	2. Somewhat	3. Yes	4. Definitely
14%	21%	34%	32%

4. **Overall, I like Block Scheduling.**

1. Not really	2. Somewhat	3. Yes	4. Definitely
8%	19%	48%	25%

5. **If you had to give Block Scheduling a grade, what would it be?**

A	A-	B	B-	C	C-	D	D-	F
21%	29%	28%	10%	9%	5%	4%	2%	1%

6 **What I like best about Block Scheduling is :**

- Overall, I like Block Scheduling
- You don't get much homework
- Open campus for seniors
- It is easier for certain subjects like the arts
- I have time to organize all my materials
- Teachers don't just talk for 90 minutes

- The fact that you can learn more
- Not as much pressure with class work
- I'm getting better grades
- Having more time to talk to teachers
- You can get more credits
- I only have to worry about four classes
- It's good for science classes and art, having a long time for projects
- You have more time for questions
- I get more time to take exams
- Being able to take two Spanish classes per year
- Not as many final exams
- I'm able to take different classes such as sign language
- I don't feel so rushed in Chemistry
- More activities that are hands on
- The possibility to take more electives
- The teachers let you get up and do things
- Being able to take more classes like welding and art
- Frequent course changes

7. What I like least about Block Scheduling is :

- Long classes, sitting in one spot for 90 minutes
- Classes are too long
- Teachers not changing their styles
- Lecture, lecture, lecture
- It's too long and I can't stay focused
- The gaps in the material covered in class
- Teachers who give homework during class
- Not having a study hall
- 90 minute lectures
- You're only with the teacher a small amount of time a year
- Some classes are boring. Long classes sometimes make me less interested
- If you get a teacher who likes to talk you fall asleep
- When the teachers run out of things to teach, we get stuck doing nothing for the rest of the time
- The teachers load on the homework and projects

- Sometimes I feel like I'm behind on the classes
- Teachers can't get in all the curriculum under Block Scheduling
- We are learning far less than what we were learning before
- I thought the teachers were supposed to do more class work and not as much lecturing
- Classes are way too long
- Gaps between the classes like French I and French II
- Some teachers have not altered their teaching styles making it very difficult to focus on the subject
- Stop lecturing
- We have more tests
- Doing homework in class
- Block Scheduling doesn't have any drawbacks that I can think of
- Sometimes the day goes by faster
- Lunches are usually crowded
- Long, boring math classes
- I hate the fact that students are not learning as much in the small amount of time that they have for classes

FACULTY:

Teachers in public schools across America are being asked to in some cases do the impossible. Their roles and responsibilities have greatly changed since the days of the schoolmaster in the one room schoolhouse in New Hampshire in 1872. In a historical museum in New England, the rules for teachers were posted for all to see. They read:

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings per week if they go to church regularly.
5. After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each day a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention,

integrity and honesty.

9. The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

Certainly the role of the teacher has changed. Today, the teacher is expected to be a "Jack or Jill of all trades". With the implementation of initiatives of the School Reform Movement, teachers are expected to devote hours of work into developing curriculum, and classroom materials and assessing students. This, in addition to the many tasks that have been taken on by public high schools means that teachers need to be very organized and responsible for managing multiple priorities. Teachers are held more accountable as professionals and are held to high expectations from the students and the community.

Teachers were asked to provide feedback in narrative form concerning issues such as:

- Behavior problems
- Differences in grades
- Do you think you know your students better?
- What about curriculum and content?
- Comments heard from students
- Comments heard from parents
- Team-teaching/interdisciplinary curriculum
- Do you give more or less homework?
- Ways we are assessing students in the classroom
- Staff development needs
- Instructional methodologies being used
- What about students who require more time to learn the material?
- Any other questions we should be asking as part of evaluating Block Scheduling?

In the surveys returned, teachers provided very lengthy narrative comments that should be taken into consideration in all future assessments of Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School.

A partial list of teacher comments include:

- There has been an increase in grades (A's and F's)
- I try to break up classes and present the material in different ways
- I see fewer behavior problems
- My staff development needs are being met

A partial list of teacher comments include: continued

- We are not covering as much material as we need to produce the SAT scores that we have been producing
- I have tried to do interdisciplinary curriculum but have seldom found willing cooperation
- Opportunities exist for extra help
- I see a reduction in the number of concepts I can teach
- I'm concerned that some students don't have English classes for a full year. Three terms of English per year would be very helpful
- I see fewer problems in the hallways but an increase in the lower level classes
- Less homework is given
- I don't lecture as much
- I have seen an improvement in student's grades and less frustration in classes
- The verdict is still out on the appropriate assessment of students at PHS. I believe that portfolio assessments, projects and experimental activities should be part of the assessment process in more classes
- Parents of students who will be attending next year have many questions and concerns especially about the length of classes and teaching style.
- Less hall confusion between blocks and during class seems apparent
- "I love blocks and don't want to go back". Also, to have a really top-notch school, class sizes must stay small. This has been a challenge.
- Block Scheduling provides excellent opportunities for my construction and woodworking classes. The timeframe allows for reasonable instructional time and then sufficient hands-on performance, as well as adequate clean up. Importantly, I have time enough to touch base with all of my students and their projects, and am able to provide the extra attention and support to those students requiring additional assistance.
- With Block Scheduling, I definitely know my students well and I am better able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. It is an asset to those students who are enjoying the subjects to have time to put in extra effort in class.
- On a personal note, my sons both wish they had Block Scheduling. Their current 7 period days do not provide enough time to gear up and get "into" their courses. They have both asked me if they can come to PHS for the scheduling and facilities.
- We need a time out area for students who are constantly disruptive in class. The lack of an alternative location for problem students is a real shortcoming in our program.
- I absolutely see fewer behavior problems in my classes especially last year and this year.
- I don't know my students very well.

A partial list of teacher comments include: continued

- Cover less material, able to do more activities
- We are doing interdisciplinary curriculum within the department
- Because of Block Scheduling, there is a need for more advanced classes across the board
- More material is given in less time
- Atmosphere more relaxed
- There are a variety of activities in model classes which helps students stay productive
- Special needs teachers can work in more classrooms to work with students and teachers
- Students are not always prepared for advanced courses
- Lunch time is a mess and should be changed
- No matter what schedule we follow, we have lost the content battle
- Learning is more meaningful
- I hope we are committed to the block
- I enjoy being without study halls
- Certain math courses have lost some content and it is showing. We have already had to develop a new course, Algebra III to cover lost content.
- My instructional methods have changed
- In the beginning of the year, I set goals for myself
- I do not feel that I am getting to know the students better
- Comments from teachers are positive except about teachers lecturing for 90 minutes
- Our AP scores in English dropped the first year of Block Scheduling because the course stopped in January and the AP test was not given until May. The gap in this time is viewed as a problem. This year we did very well on the exam, a good indicator because students who earned a 5 (top grade) had not previously been in honors English. Students certainly gain a greater understanding and do more thinking using this method of instruction.
- Less material covered in class, 80%.
- I have less papers to correct

PARENTS:

On the parent survey, respondents were asked 4 questions. Several parents called the high school to provide additional information about the answers on their surveys. There is definitely interest from parents regarding their child attending Portsmouth High School under Block Scheduling. Several parents in particular are interested in how the faculty and administration are assessing the schedule and what and how the "benchmarks" are being decided and assessed.

Many parents submitted very lengthy narrative responses to each question on the surveys. It is felt that this showed that there is a great deal of interest in parental involvement and concerns in Block Scheduling. A partial list of responses is provided for each question.

1. **Block Scheduling affords the opportunity to teach in greater depth. Has this been your experience with your child?**
   - Certain classes lend themselves to Block Scheduling (history, gym, English) however classes that build on concepts do not. If a child is unable to grasp the first concept introduced, they will fall further behind.
   - Yes, with the exception of foreign language.
   - No, the last half of each class is treated like a study hall for students to do homework.
   - I am a little worried about enough in-depth time with Spanish and algebra
   - It really varies from course to course.
   - In some cases all subject matter cannot be covered.
   - Yes, except when it comes to French and other languages.
   - Yes, I definitely feel that there are more teaching opportunities.
   - There seems to be pressure to cover the needed information in a small time period.
   - Cover less material but do lots more creative play.
   - Only so much can be observed in a given amount of time especially math and science
   - No, affords greater depth if a student can keep up.
   - My experience has been that certain subjects have been taught in more depth especially English, social studies programs continue to rely too heavily on a lecture format for a sustained period.
   - It has depended on the teacher in question. Many do well, some haven't caught the vision.
   - I do feel that Block Scheduling will be educationally beneficial.

- I feel that the child gets more exposed to a variety of different areas in different subjects, good planning!
- There are problems in math and language areas.
- Students can only assimilate so much information for one day.
- No, most subjects cannot be discussed for 90 minutes, teachers give lots of free time to begin homework.
- It seems like more time to do homework.
- Yes, with the good teachers. No, with the ones who continue to lecture.
- With some classes 90 minute periods seem appropriate but many times I hear comments from teachers that there is still not enough time to teach all that is necessary. Some teachers find it hard to fill 90 minutes in a way to keep students interested.
- Very positive. My son likes being able to have time to apply what he learned immediately.
- There have been some complaints that teachers cram a lot of work into the last term which is difficult when a students has four classes. Also there are lots of breaks between two of her language classes and it took a while to catch up with the other students in Spanish 4
- Foreign language courses might work better on your schedule.. Also some teachers tend to lecture which doesn't fit most students needs.
- It depends on the teacher and whether he/she is invested in the class.
- My daughter says less material is covered.
- The benefits of Block Scheduling fit my child's learning style.
- I like this schedule especially for kids who learn in different ways.
- The students cover less material than before.
- The schedule change has not affected any of my child's grades or study habits
- As the number of academic increases, there are more hours devoted to homework making extra curricula activities difficult
- No, grades have been consistent, homework is reasonable and study habits are the same
- Not much less here than at St. Thomas
- Grades are unchanged
- Better grades
- It is too early in the school year to tell
- No
- Seems to need more study time to keep up

2. **Have you seen any changes in your child's grades, the amount of homework, or study habits that you can attribute to Block Scheduling?**

- The amount of homework seems to be the same
- Less homework/better grades
- I would recommend that you take one of the blocks and break it into 2 separate periods
- Some teachers have blossomed with Block Scheduling, some haven't
- Hardly any homework is given
- Why should seniors have only 3 courses instead of 4? Is this encouraging learning?
- Students can spend more time on a subject to improve their grades
- My son does not think that some subjects like chemistry can be covered in one semester
- Less stress
- Works hard, able to concentrate better
- A student can get on honor roll in each subject
- My daughter is very conscientious and I feel she would be the same in any style of teaching
- In most courses our children appear to be motivated and interested
- Not sure
- Yes
- More focused in each class
- Yes, honors English was a problem due to the workload. It was probably the same as before but done in a shorter time.
- Less homework
- Less homework is being done because it is being done in school during teaching time
- I think his learning has decreased. Algebra I and II and Spanish were less than successful.

3. **Have you observed any changes in your child's academic performance in response to the various instructional methods that the teachers are using since we changed to a 90-minute period?**

- Yes, but this could be due to maturity
- No
- Trying to cram too much work into 90 minute periods
- My son's performance has been erratic since Block Scheduling

- What various instructional methods? Too few teachers are changing. There is dead time in each class
- As long as the teacher can keep the 90 minute period from being boring
- Should the highest achievers pay the price for Block Scheduling?
- In some classes, there seems to be a lot of time watching videos
- Yes, improved enthusiasm etc.
- No, my child does well academically anyway
- My child is succeeding but gets burnt out early in the school year
- The price to pay for a 4 period day instead of 7 is less material covered
- There is much less of a challenge here than at St. Thomas but she's happier
- I recommend 3-90 minute periods and 2-45 minute periods
- Not all teachers have changed their teaching habits
- I have seen improvement in her learning ability
- No
- Not really
- Yes
- I believe the SAT's are lower, my opinion

4. **Any additional comments?**
   - My child does enjoy Block Scheduling
   - It seems that students now attending local universities should be surveyed for their view of their own preparedness compared to their peers who did not attend the Block Scheduling environment. What about surveying local universities and employers to get any pertinent information about student quality ?
   - I think school should start later than 7:30 for teenagers
   - I do like Block Scheduling and would like to see it continue
   - Look at a flexible block-3-90 minute periods and 2-45 minute periods
   - My opinion is that the total content of subject material is less in Block Scheduling and requires less of the students.
   - I have concerns about band and Block Scheduling
   - Have you considered an alternate day?
   - Block Scheduling will give teachers more time to teach and students more time to learn the subject matter
   - Fred seems to like school much better this year
   - Keep up the good work. I feel that Block Scheduling is a good way for teaching a variety of work in a shorter time

- My son says to keep the lunch period long because he can get help from a teacher without them rushing through
- My child feels very overwhelmed by the amount of homework
- Math Department needs help...students are not prepared for college
- Have some concern about the delay between language classes
- It would be nice to find a solution to the band/chorus dilemma
- Not enough core curriculum courses
- Have difficulty in choosing between AP courses and band/chorus
- I like it because it's less hectic
- Block Scheduling cheats the arts
- Both of our children like the Block Schedule-wider range of courses
- I would like to see classes offered on alternate days

Section VIII. Summary

"The great difficulty in education is to get experience out of idea."

George Santayana

In 1957, a 184-pound rocket called Sputnik changed the world forever. Even today, we refer to this single event as one that impacted education for years to come. After years of neglect, education was now in the headlines. We were now in the space race with one of the largest countries in the world. There were many unknowns, however we did know that we needed to learn more mathematics and science. Our survival was threatened. Now 40 years later, the world is described as a global village and once again education is the focus of governmental and community initiatives. Knowledge has taken on a more specialized focus with a great deal of importance attached to it.

The quest for the ideal secondary school schedule change reaches back as far as the 1890's. Most recently with the advent of technology and a national focus on education, we have been forced to take a hard look at the industrial model of education that we have for so long endured. There is an intensive change taking place which will effect the arrangement of time, instructional methods, teachers, students and what is actually being taught in schools as well as the application it has on a student when they leave the high school program.

Because the Block Schedule has become relatively common only in the past few years, there are not many multi-school studies that use recognized instruments such as the Scholastic Assessment Test or state exams to gauge and measure student achievement. In New Hampshire, with the mandated state testing which will drive curriculum alignment, we can only measure the performance of students after Block Scheduling. It will be very important to maintain accurate records of student achievement from this point. Anyone who has had involvement in the most basic restructuring has experienced certain frustrations that even the most minor changes can produce. Many educators who have been in the system for a few years share a cynicism about reform. Only if educators are involved in the planning and assessment of change will it be better accepted and successful.

While there are many different Block Scheduling models, the most common approach is the 4x4 plan. Block Scheduling in any form should not be seen as a panacea. It can hardly be seen as a new idea. In one form or another, alternative scheduling has been

around since 1911. Remember the modular scheduling of the 70's? There have been other attempts throughout the years to adapt the high school schedule to maximize learning.

Block Scheduling significantly changes the work of teachers. It requires an initial investment in time and planning to re-organize the curriculum and content and demands a high level of energy promoting and assessing student learning. It will take an effort to make the high school more personal, which contributes to a positive school climate and a safer, more trustful environment. The creative talents that professional teachers have can be used in such a way that students will experience more success, the teacher will feel better about his/her job and more of an effort can be put forth for collegiality to create new activities, technologies and techniques for the classroom. Students will be better prepared to make the transition from school to life and be involved in meaningful classroom activities that have real life application.

Breaking Ranks (1996), a report discussed earlier calls for personalizing the high school. It is difficult for students to work at peak performance and ability when they are forced to attend large buildings that appear to be unsafe and not welcoming. Although massive structural changes are costly, and prohibited in most communities, thinking about ways to make the building more appealing with pictures and student work displayed, evidence of friendly faculty and support staff in the hallways and classrooms, displays, open houses, regular announcements and mailings and regular parent contact and opportunities for students to discuss issues are ways to personalize the high school without any additional monetary cost. All this makes for a trusting and respectful environment. As one teacher recently described, "think about the cafeteria for instance, we treat it like a mess hall where everyone goes through the line and gets the same thing dropped on their tray. In this era of fast food, we might change the cafeteria setup from a line of people with trays to students walking up to the counter and asking for their lunch, especially when everyone now can select what they want to eat anyway. The present physical setup and lighting is not conducive to what we have as expectations for students outside the high school. Why set up artificial expectations?" (Arnstein, 1997).

When the extended time or Block Scheduling concept was first introduced at Portsmouth High School, it was well received although public opinion was as volatile as the stock market daily trends. A great deal of information was requested by all constituents who would be affected by a change in the schedule.

As this Status Report is being printed and disseminated, the faculty and administration is in the process of discussing possible modifications to the present schedule to accommodate the concerns that have raised through the surveys and data collection surrounding the issues of band and music, foreign languages and concerns about the lunchtime schedule, the amount of lecture, class size, and interdisciplinary curriculum.

Recommendations For Further Study

Throughout the course of assessing Block Scheduling, there have been several items that are identified through surveys, discussions and as a result of implementing a change from a 7 period day to Block Schedule. It is recommended that each of these receive attention at Portsmouth High School in the future:

1. The 45-minute lunch where everyone is free at the same time has presented some problems around crowd control in the cafeterias and especially the foyer area. It is true that many clubs and class meetings are held during the lunch time and this has had an increase in attendance as opposed to meeting after school, however, many students elect to eat their lunch sitting on the floor while others are antagonistic. There is a high noise level and the custodians have experienced problems with trash.
2. It is difficult to schedule band, chorus, music and foreign languages. As of November 1997, the faculty has been given the task of investigating ways during the 1997-1998 school year to improve this.
3. When teachers need additional classroom materials and supplies, they should be readily available due to the numbers of students electing to take classes.
4. Substitute teachers are cited as a weak link. They need training, clear and precise lesson plans from teachers who they are substituting for. If they do not "buy into" the concept of Block Scheduling and do not understand the expectation necessary to maintain consistency, they can unintentionally enable students to create problems for everyone. They need to be responsible and knowledgeable about classroom management and be aware of school rules and policies.
5. Teachers are concerned with having to prioritize curriculum content. Hence the discussion of " not enough time to teach everything".
6. Class size needs to be kept down in all classes. High numbers of students in any one class compromises the ability of teachers to provide varied instructional strategies.
7. There is a need to develop appropriate benchmarks for assessing teaching and learning in all areas.
8. Assistance in developing interdisciplinary curriculum and additional instructional methodologies to reduce the lecture time for teachers who may still have difficulty breaking away from traditional teaching methods must be available.
9. Enlist the commitment of a group of professional teachers to meet over a period of time during the next two years, to monitor the continuation of Block Scheduling. Their charge should be to assess and make further recommendations in the areas of curriculum, the use of instructional time, student achievement and school climate.
10. Develop a list of opportunities to enhance the present Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School. As an example, persue recognition and awards for students and teachers based on student and teacher performance, quality and excellence in the school program. Allow teachers opportunities to make presentations, write publications and provide staff development training for other schools. Continue opportunities for teachers to be paid for time during the summer to attend workshops,

conferences, and institutes to acquire new skills and create new and exciting curriculums.

11. Enlist the professional skills of representatives of the Portsmouth High School faculty and others to use the data from this status report to develop a formalized evaluation at the 5 year point examining the effects of extended time and a change in the schedule has had on faculty and students.
12. Continue the investigation of adapting the daily schedule further to accommodate the band and music programs whose number of students involved has apparently decreased, the development of a structured orientation and monitoring of substitutes who need to be involved, communicated with on a regular basis in order to have continuity of instruction, discipline, and school safety/policies.
13. Look at ways the time schedule may be adapted to accommodate the concern teachers have about the sequencing of math and foreign language courses.
14. With the new equipment and technology at the high school, build a comprehensive data base for collecting accurate statistics on grades (numbers of A's and F's for example), discipline referrals, attendance and other pertinent data that will provide valuable information from year to year for observing trends that will impact how and what teachers are teaching.
15. Consider the following benchmarks in the continuing assessment of Block Scheduling:
    - Look at how guidance counselors are encouraging students to take academic classes.
    - Look at what teachers are teaching classes (experienced vs. non-experienced).
    - The gender of teachers in math and science and the number of girls in classes).
    - Number of students in the graduating class.
    - Number and percentage of students in each class receiving diplomas.
    - Number of students taking advanced placement and honors classes.
    - The number of boys and girls taking academic classes.
    - How teachers are using their time, and how instruction has changed for them.
16. Investigate ways to change the length of the lunch period and the problems that arise in the foyer with students for whom 45 minutes may be too long.
17. Consider the process of evaluating the transcripts of students who transfer into Portsmouth High School from high schools in other geographic areas who do not have alternative scheduling. Many times, getting course content to line up is difficult at best.
18. A longitudinal study must be undertaken using the information in the Status Report and other data collected each semester for the purpose of assessing the impact on the school.

19. Investigate how SAT and AP scores have varied and the reasons for any changes and the impact these have on curriculum development. Begin looking at the data such as score variations and differences between males and females taking the test.
20. Develop resources and materials for students who will be taking the SAT such as: SAT Trainer materials and specialized tutoring available as well as group study for students.
21. Conduct follow-up studies of recent graduates concerning their attitudes about the amount of preparation they feel they received with Block Scheduling as they are involved in the first and second year of a college or university program.
22. Develop appropriate transitional strategies from the middle to high school that prepare students for the high school program and the academic, social and behavioral expectations. The issue of social promotion should be examined and a policy developed. It is felt that just promoting students especially in the middle school does not benefit the student and creates an unsuccessful high school experience. Alternative educational services may be necessary for these students.
23. Encourage Middle School counselors who are assisting 8th graders with high school course planning to emphasize the academic curriculum and the importance of accumulating credits for each class that lead to graduation.
24. Develop a Web Page for Portsmouth High School that can be accessed for information about the school, students and faculty and the many initiatives and projects as a result of Block Scheduling. Employment opportunities may also be listed with descriptions to attract "the best" educators to join the faculty as openings arise.
25. All data from this status report should be shared with Department Chairs and Curriculum Supervisors to be used as information as they are planning new and evaluating present curriculum content.
26. The results of this status report, which is the beginnings of a longitudinal study, can be used to develop goals for the future and has implications on curriculum. The statistical data in Section VI. should be examined.

Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School is only one aspect of the School Restructuring Movement that is occurring in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and all American High Schools. However, Block Scheduling has generated a major change in the school day which is very different from the school day three years ago prior to the 4X4 Block Plan.

Some of the positive changes identified by students, faculty and parents include:

- A more positive school climate in student behavior, more school spirit and fewer disruptions in school.
- A syllabus for each class has been developed.
- Teachers have more planning time.
- Teachers are assessing students in new ways through portfolios and authentic assessment.
- There is more parent involvement in the school.
- Graduation requirements have been increased.
- There is a significant decrease in the number of days teachers are absent during the school year. When asked, most teachers say, "it's not worth being out".
- A substitute packet has been developed to orient substitutes with the school rules and expectations as well as how to deal with classroom management.
- The formation of a committee initiated by students to examine the issue of starting school at a later time using research about adolescents sleep and study habits.
- A new Student Center has opened to provide academic support or tutoring for students with an after school recreation program.
- Increased opportunities for students and parents exist to provide input in the governance of the school on certain issues.
- Opportunities for students to take an undergraduate academic course at the University of New Hampshire in computers, calculus or physics while they are attending high school is now available under certain conditions.
- The faculty have instituted a new system of progress reports that makes students more responsible, increases the level of parent involvement and makes the process easier for teachers. With the new system of progress reports distributed at an open house at the high school, it is estimated that in October 1997, the largest number of parents ever, visited the school to meet with teachers.
- It appears that fewer daylong field trips outside the building for particular classes are scheduled. Teachers and students report that it is too difficult to miss other classes all day.
- The attendance secretaries report that the daily school attendance is improved slightly. This forced a change in the attendance policy. In the past, students were allowed to have 6 unexcused absences, now they are allowed only 4 at which time they receive administrative failure and are in jeopardy of not receiving credit for a course.

Section VIII. Summary

- The Guidance Department has designed and implemented a curriculum of "Developmental Career Planning" for all students that provides for assistance to students by counselors in careers and the development of a 4 year educational plan for all students.
- Curriculum guides have been written for each class in all departments, which outline course content and a description of how a particular course is taught within a sequence. Syllabi for classes have recently been written.
- Graduation requirements have been increased that in addition to an increase in the number of courses taken, students may have a portfolio of their work, a resume in the belief that a more competitive environment can stimulate a greater number of students to work harder and achieve more. This has prompted a discussion about differential diplomas for high school graduation.

Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School has helped to set a course of better preparing the students for the 21st Century. It continues to be part of a more comprehensive call for "quality" in the school and an impetus for change in other areas. Restructuring has become a process not just a product. Individual teachers will continue to develop creative and innovative ways to teach and reach students, the curriculum will improve and student assessment with become more of a planning tool than an annual curse. Teachers will move toward interdisciplinary curriculum and continuous improvement in the classroom with all constituents involved, responsible and accountable for the quality education students receive at Portsmouth High School.

There are still many questions and concerns that need to be addressed in the coming years because of school reform and the new initiatives that have been implemented. Increasing graduation requirements to include senior research projects, individual resumes, community service learning experiences and internships in the community are only a few issues that come to mind. Those who oppose Block Scheduling cite the inability of teachers to change their instructional practices or the way they teach without intensive training and believe that fewer class periods during the school produce more conflicts in scheduling courses. The one course that comes to mind immediately is band. As stated previously, fewer students are signing up for band and marching band because they "can't fit it into their schedule" during the day which requires the course to be available after school which may still prevent some students from being involved due to transportation. The issue of "content" almost always is raised by opponents of Block Scheduling.

Instead of rows and rows of passive students, we have an opportunity for change with the initiatives of school reform. Exciting, vibrant classrooms with motivated learners can be the norm in American high schools.

One last caution. We must all understand that the implementation of Block Scheduling is not an isolated event. It is a continuing process. It will be necessary to make adjustments that should not be seen as failures but modifications in the process of effective change.

Section VIII. Summary

After reading the first draft of this Status Report on Block Scheduling, there appears to be one word that has been typed most often and continually surfaces not only in the planning of Block Scheduling but in the recommendations and in the concerns with students, teachers and parents. That one word is **O-P-P-O-R-T-U-N-I-T-Y**. How a school who is considering or implementing Block Scheduling handles this opportunity is dependent on the commitment of everyone involved. No doubt this is not a perfect system. It may be appropriate for high schools to look very carefully at the research and data that exists, evaluate their own resources and use pieces of Block Scheduling that can have positive outcomes on Teaching and Learning. As Governor Shaheen stated in her address at the Education Summit of October 15, 1997, "Great things are happening in public schools in New Hampshire". Printed on the cover of a school budget report in a small New Hampshire town in 1915 reads:

"The best advertisement for a town, is good schoolhouses"

Block Scheduling is not the answer...it is an opportunity to determine how we can better engage all students in the learning process.

Section IX. References

"Youth comes but once in a lifetime."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

In addition to the books, periodicals and newsletters listed here on Block Scheduling, more information related to planning and implementation of alternative scheduling options and instructional methodologies can be found on various websites on the Internet. Much of the research was conducted at The Harvard University Graduate School, Principals Center in Cambridge Massachusetts, and the University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire.

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Section X. Appendices

1. Principal David Matthews Memo of February 23, 1994
2. Portsmouth Strategic Plan
3. Schedule Proposal/Questions and Answers about Block Scheduling
4. April 1996 Student Survey and Results of Block Scheduling
5. Interview with Principal Richard Gremlitz
6. Interview with Ms. Susan O. Anderson, Guidance Director
7. Interview with Mr. Gary Eastman, Science Department Chair
8. Interview with Ms. Barbara Fyles, Special Needs Department Co-Chair
9. Faculty survey of September 1997
10. Student Survey of September 1997
11. Parent survey of September 1997

PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

February 23, 1994

PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

DAVID MATTHEWS
PRINCIPAL

DR. ROBERT LISTER
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

ANN ORLANDO
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

TO: Portsmouth Board of Education

FROM: Dave Matthews DJM

RE: Scheduling Options

"THE PURPOSE OF THE PORTSMOUTH SCHOOLS IS TO EDUCATE ALL STUDENTS BY CHALLENGING THEM TO BECOME THINKING, RESPONSIBLE, CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS WHO CONTINUE TO LEARN THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES."

The high school is exploring a number of scheduling alternatives. We have not yet reached the point of making a specific recommendation. Tonight's report is merely to update the Board on schedules being investigated. We also continue to seek staff input and additional scheduling proposals.

The common thread of these options is a double length class at least once a week. The impetus for desiring the initiation of double block classes is the implementation of the Quality Educational Practices as outlined in the Portsmouth Strategic Plan. These practices are: a) Process Learning; b) Cooperative/Collaborative Learning; c) Problem-Centered Learning; d) Continuous Student Assessment. It is believed that the double block classes will provide the environment for active, thoughtful, and experientially rich learning that are the desired outcomes of the Quality Educational Practices.

Option A

Continue a seven period day three days per week. Double block (95 minutes) classes are scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays. Period 5 classes continue to meet daily for 50 minutes. The Advisor/Advisee period is held twice weekly for a longer block of time than presently.

Option B

Initiates an 8 period day. classes are 46 minutes in length. All classes meet for double block on either Tuesday or Thursday. The 8 period day would provide students with the opportunity to take additional electives.

Option C

This option calls for a six period schedule with a longer lunch and advisee period. Study halls would be eliminated in this plan. Periods are significantly longer than in the other proposals. Each class meets twice a week for double block periods.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

This Strategic Plan demonstrates the commitment of educators and citizens of Portsmouth to the improvement of public education in our City. The plan is the result of extensive research by Portsmouth teachers, administrators, parents, students, paraprofessionals, School Board members, and community residents. Its contents were influenced by recognized education experts, emerging national standards for curriculum, and the current body of research on systemic school improvement, student learning and motivation, and effective instructional approaches.

The Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a valuable tool in our pursuit of excellence. It will continue to be reviewed and modified to ensure that at all times it reflects our best and most current thinking.

Organization of this Handbook

The philosophical foundations of the Strategic plan are reflected in the district's mission statement as well as in its statements of beliefs, strategic education parameters, and planning objectives, all of which are included in this first section of the handbook.

Section II focuses on student outcomes -- i.e., on the attitudes, skills, and core knowledge that will enable Portsmouth students to become productive, responsible citizens in a diverse, global community. Essential to the Strategic Plan's specification of learning outcomes for all students and district-wide instructional philosophy within each discipline is the overarching concept of Learning to Learn, a process that equips and motivates students to continue to learn and grow throughout their lives.

Section III identifies several Quality Educational Practices that help create active, thoughtful, and experientially rich learning environments in which all students can achieve the outcomes specified in this plan. Based upon constructivist assumptions that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner, these Quality Practices reflect the view that teachers and the quality of instruction are the most critical elements of successful schools. It is teachers and teaching that most directly impact a student's learning. Although research in the area of effective teaching and its relationship to student learning is still a new field, it is expected that Portsmouth educators will integrate these Quality Practices with those practices that already work well for students now.

Section IV describes the Continuous Improvement Plan for all staff, which aims to promote the professional growth necessary to successfully achieve the student outcomes specified in the Strategic Plan. Continuous Improvement emphasizes self-assessment, goal setting, learning/using new practices, peer support, collaborative performance appraisal, and mentoring. Much of what is known about how adults learn has been incorporated in the Continuous Improvement Plan, as evidenced in its emphasis on collaborative goal setting and peer support.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Portsmouth Public Schools is to educate all students by challenging them to become thinking, responsible, contributing citizens who continue to learn throughout their lives.

STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

The purpose of schools is learning.

Learning is natural and ongoing throughout one's life.

People learn in different ways and at different rates.

Higher expectations produce higher results.

It is essential to recognize the importance of cooperation, as well as competition, in our complex society.

Education is fundamental to the successful functioning of society and must be a top priority.

Education is the responsibility of the entire community.

A partnership among students, teachers, parents, and all other community members is necessary to prepare our children for the future.

Our community is a classroom.

Our rapidly changing world demands an openness to new knowledge.

Children need to feel good about themselves.

Everyone is entitled to a safe, supportive, and secure learning environment.

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Each student is entitled to an education that fosters the development of the individual's full potential.

Individuals are ultimately responsible for their own actions and achievements.

A child's education is our investment in the future.

EDUCATIONAL PARAMETERS

We will not:

Give up on any child.

Allow anything to take precedence over achievement of student outcomes.

Accept substandard performance of students or staff.

Allow any student to be restricted in his or her quest for knowledge. We will guarantee equity in education.

Allow students to graduate who have not met the requirements of their educational programs.

Accept any behavior or practice that makes parents feel unwelcome in their child's school.

Tolerate any behavior that demeans the worth or dignity of any individual or disrupts the educational process.

Implement any new program without a favorable cost/benefit analysis, staff preparation, and acceptable evaluation design.

Initiate policies or programs that endanger the environment.

"Children are the future. Everything we do is for them, and everything that will be done will be done by them."

Clay Morgan

"We can and should shape our future, for if we don't, someone else surely will."

Joel Barker, Futurist

"Even if you're on the right track, if you're standing still, you'll get run over."

Mark Twain

STRATEGIC PLANNING OBJECTIVES*

1. By <u>December 1993</u>, the Portsmouth School District **will develop student outcomes and methods of evaluating student competencies**, which will enable all graduates to successfully function in the 21st century.

   The outcomes to be developed for primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels will include, but not be limited to, the following skills:

   Communication
   - Reading/Writing
   - World Studies/Foreign Languages/Cultures
   - Math/Science
   - Reading Images
   - Listening/Speaking
   - The Arts
   - Technology

   Conceptualization
   - Memorization
   - Comprehension
   - Application
   - Synthesis
   - Analysis
   - Evaluation
   - Extrapolation

   Coping
   - Physical Well-Being
   - Social Well-Being
   - Emotional Well-Being
   - Team Work
   - Appreciation for Diversity

2. By <u>December 1993</u>, the Portsmouth School District **will implement a plan to restructure curriculum/programs and instructional practices/organization** to make the most of learning time and promote interdisciplinary studies to enable all students to successfully attain the district's stated outcomes.

3. By <u>July 1992</u>, the Portsmouth School District **will design a plan to restructure the overall organization** to accomplish our mission and objectives. The planning, restructuring, and resulting organizational system will involve parents, students, teachers, administrators, School Board members, and the greater community in decision making.

*Strategic Planning Objectives were developed by the Strategic Planning Committee in November 1991. In some cases, objectives and timelines have been altered by specific Action Teams.

4. By September 1996, all staff will **demonstrate competency in identified effective practices** that are directly related to district-wide student outcomes. In order to achieve this, the time and money for staff development will be built into the 1992-96 budgets and calendars.

5. By September 1992, the Portsmouth School District **will initiate an on-going, comprehensive staff evaluation system for all school personnel** that will reflect the district's objectives. This will be fully implemented by July 1, 1993.

6. The Portsmouth School District will develop partnerships among students, parents, educators, and other community members.

   By September 1992, we will have established an Education Partnership Council and a comprehensive plan to implement the following:

   - Community service learning opportunities for all students
   - A formal public relations program
   - Mentorships/apprenticeships
   - Community/business partnerships
   - Ongoing community responsibility for the educational process

7. By July 1993, the Portsmouth School District **will develop a plan to have 100% of the parents and community be aware of school programs and events and participate** in at least one school function each year.

8. By December 1991, the Portsmouth School District **will provide all constituent groups an opportunity to gain awareness of the Strategic Planning Process and its results, and to give input** to the mission statement, belief statements, educational parameters, and planning objectives.

PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE PROPOSAL

Highlights

This proposal results in a school day of four instructional blocks of 90 minutes in length. Students and staff would have a common lunch time of 45 minutes. The school day would be lengthened by 22 minutes.

Freshmen and sophomores would be expected to take four classes per day. Juniors could take four classes or opt for community service in place of a class. Seniors would be expected to take three classes per day.

Thus, instructional time for the average student would increase by 60 minutes per day (six classes x 50 minutes = 300 under present system vs. 4 classes x 90 minutes = 360 under proposed system).

Staff would teach no more than three of the four blocks. Total teaching time for the day would increase by 20 minutes (5 classes x 50 minutes = 250 minutes under present schedule vs. 3 classes x 90 minutes = 270 minutes under proposed schedule).

A year long course under the present system (180 meeting in 50 minute periods) are combined into a single semester (90 meetings of 90 minutes each). Semester length courses will be offered in quarter length classes (9 weeks). Students change these classes at the end of each 9 week grading period. Some classes (i.e., AP physics) could be scheduled to meet for three quarters.

There would be no study halls. There would be fewer passings each day which reduces fragmentation, tardiness to class, and disruptive behavior. It makes for a calmer atmosphere.

Hoped For - -
Student and Staff Outcomes

The Portsmouth High School plan is expected to produce the following outcomes for students: improvement in student academic success and achievement; decline in drop-out rate, resulting in increased graduation rate; reduction in student stress; greater opportunity to take elective courses; reduction in number of courses taken at any given time, thus students would have fewer classes to prepare for; increased opportunity for students to earn more credits per year; increased opportunity for more individualized attention and instruction due to smaller classes of longer duration and varied instructional strategies; reduction in the number of books and materials for students to manage; opportunities for socialization with friends during a longer lunch time; greater involvement of students in extra-curricular activities through scheduling club meetings during lunch; expanded opportunities to make up classes failed within the school year as opposed to summer school; and increased academic achievement resulting from earlier intervention and increased feedback from teachers using varied evaluation strategies in assessing student learning.

Some outcomes expected for staff include: fewer preparations (maximum of three); smaller and longer classes allow for more individualized instruction; fewer classes in a row (maximum of two before a lunch break or planning period); 40% fewer students each semester allows earlier detection and intervention with student problems; fewer students and fewer classes allows a focus on written/essay assessments as opposed to reliance on objective tests; longer lunch provides more opportunity for planning and collegiality; longer uninterrupted planning periods and 25% of the staff unscheduled at any given time creates an opportunity for common planning and communication among all staff; reduced administrative tasks for teachers; lab oriented classes have adequate time for laboratory experiences with closure; increased time for field trips, community guest presentations and interdisciplinary activities; encourages use of a wide variety of teaching methods; expanded time for parental contact; less fragmentation of instruction with more quality assignments.

Some Questions and Answers

Q: Won't we have less instructional time under this block plan than we have with present traditional schedule?

A: Absolutely not! First and foremost, the instructional day for the average student will increase by one hour. This equates to nearly 30 additional school days!

Although the total number of minutes of each course will be reduced, the administrative functions (attendance, assignments, collecting homework, etc.) will be cut by 50%, thus offsetting that loss.

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Q: I can't lecture for 90 minutes and my kids can't handle a 90 minute lecture. What will I do?

A: Staff is being encouraged to explore a variety of instructional methods. In-service and resources are being provided system-wide to assist staff in implementing the Quality Practices of the Strategic Plan. Also, staff members are willing to share their expertise and experiences.

Teachers will have the opportunity to work with individuals and small groups. Students will have the opportunity to practice what they are learning and get immediate assistance from the teachers or their peers.

Funds will be requested for some staff to work this summer to plan lessons under the new format.

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Q: Won't we have a problem with make-up work when a student is absent? When you miss, you are missing two class periods, not one.

A: Upon return to school a student will have fewer classes for which to do make-up work. also, we hope there will be fewer absences for frivolous reasons under the block system. You can also look at this concern from a different point of view . . . . when a student attends class, he or she is in effect attending two classes.

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Q: What about the gap in time that may exist in sequential courses?

A: One of the things that the research is showing is that we should concentrate on fewer concepts and do them in greater depth for a real understanding and carry over. The Quality Practices encourages this viewpoint. Of course, we also expect that the block schedule will allow students to take two sequential courses in the same year (i.e., French I and French II), thus reducing the gap.

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Q: How will block scheduling impact eligibility for athletes?

A: I am in the process of requesting a waiver from NHIAA for Portsmouth athletes regarding the Scholastic Standing By-Law. My request will ask for eligibility if a student passes three units of work (rather than the present four). My rationale being that three units of work under the block schedule will result in an additional 70 minutes of instruction.

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Q: What happens to a student who is obviously going to fail? Does that student stay in a class for a full semester when there is no hope of passing?

A: A student can be rescheduled into an elective that starts with each new quarter. At the start of the next semester, the student could enroll in the previously failed course.

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Q: Will teachers be spending more time in the classroom under this schedule?

A: Yes. Under the traditional schedule a teacher would teach 250 minutes daily (5 classes of 50 minutes each). Under the block system, the typical teacher will teach 270 minutes (3 classes of 90 minutes). However, teachers will have the advantage of fewer preps, no more than two classes before a substantial break, fewer students to deal with daily (by 40%), and smaller classes.

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Q: Will every student be scheduled into all four blocks?

A: All freshmen and sophomores will be. Juniors may have four classes or opt for a community service project in place of a class. Seniors will be required to take three classes.

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Q: Won't there be an impact on basic skills by compressing a two semester course into only one semester?

A: It is certainly hoped that there will be. With smaller classes and fewer overall numbers of students each semester, all teachers can once again focus on written assignments, essays, and individualized feedback. We will now have time to grade papers (60 rather than 100). There will be time to focus on those students needing individual assistance.

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Q: How will this schedule reduce class size?

A: In our present schedule, a teacher teaches five classes per year. Under the block schedule, a typical teacher will teach the equivalent of six classes each year, thereby increasing the number of classes by 20%. We presently have 5 sections of algebra I averaging 27 students. We could add another section to reduce the average class size to 22.

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Q: Can students earn more credits and graduate sooner under this plan?

A: The average student now graduates with 23 credits. Under this plan the average student will earn between 28 and 30 credits. While this may allow students to graduate earlier, the intent is to provide additional opportunities to take classes they would not have been able to take under the present schedule.

We may also consider increasing graduation requirements. a committee will be formed to address this issue and make a recommendation.

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Q: We place extra-ordinary demands on honor students. Will this schedule help them?

A: Yes. They will be able to focus on fewer classes at any given time. Those looking at competitive colleges will have an outstanding academic background.

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Q: Won't this schedule hurt those department with a program that is basically elective courses?

A: On the contrary, students will have the opportunity to take more courses. Elective departments should benefit from this change.

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Q: Will the fact that students don't have a study hall create a problem?

A: It may and that might have to be reconsidered at some point. I am less concerned about the need for a time to study in school than I am about students having the time to see guidance, go to the library, etc.

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Q: Will this plan allow the school department to reduce the number of teachers since they will be teaching an additional class per year?

A: I don't believe so. We are already seeing significant increases in class size in the core academic areas. This plan will allow for reasonable class sizes without adding staff when the budget will not likely allow for many such additions.

Secondly, elective courses should see an increased enrollment due to the need of students to take additional courses.

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Q: How will you deal with all the students being free for a 45 minute lunch at the same time?

A: We are still working on that concern. I think this aspect of the schedule, though, is worthy of pursuit. Students and staff should have a reasonable amount of time for lunch and this schedule will provide it. Some things that could occur during this time include guidance appointments, library use, running the track, taking a walk on campus, using the gym, etc.

In other words, students and staff could do what most normal people do at lunch!

Portsmouth High School
Student Survey
Block Scheduling

Spring, 1996

Now that we have completed approximately 3/4 of the school year, I'm looking for your thoughts regarding how the new schedule is working for you.

Please take a few minutes in your English class to have students respond to the questions below. Return to Margaret in the Main Office by Tuesday, April 9, 1996.

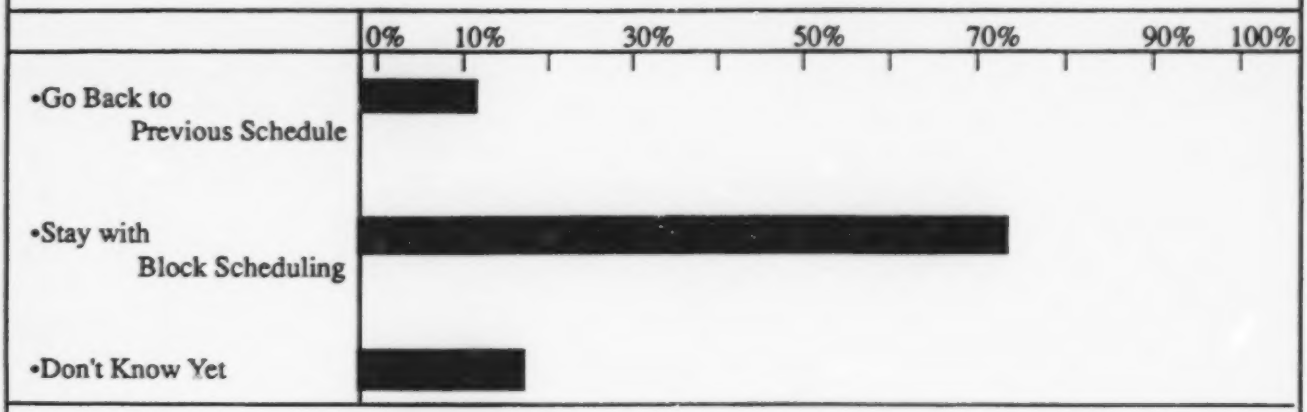
1. What I like **most** about block scheduling:

2. What I like **least** about block scheduling:

3. If I had the choice, I would:

- ☐ Return to the previous period schedule.
- ☐ Continue with block scheduling.
- ☐ Don't know yet.

Block Scheduling Summary



- **Go Back to Previous (31) = 10.1%**
- **Stay with Blocks (225) = 73.3%**
- **Don't Know Yet (51) = 16.6%**

Block Scheduling

What I like most (frequency of times mentioned):

Lunch & breaks	131
Fewer classes to prepare for	122
More time in classes	89
Day goes by faster	48
Open Campus	42
More course options	38
Less homework	38
In-depth study	36
Can earn more credits	21
Classes end in 1/2 year	16

Four others were mentioned fewer than 10 times.

- -

What I like least (frequency of times mentioned):

Too much lecture	69
Long periods	69
Sitting still for 90 minutes	62
Boring	60
Cramming in material	29
Exams too often	27
More homework	25
Coverage of material	21
Open Campus (lack of)	14
Foeign Language	12
No study halls	12
Can't use bathroom	11

Ten others were mentioned fewer than 10 times.

TEACHER SURVEY

BLOCK SCHEDULING

TO: All Faculty
FROM: Bob Lister
DATE: September 2, 1997

Now that we are entering our third year of block scheduling, it is time to start looking at a formal evaluation component for the past years. During the past summer I started working on a "Status Report" on Block Scheduling at PHS. I will be examining the hard data and statistics on areas such as attendance, honor roll, college application/attendance, SAT/ACT scores, and AP applications. In addition, I am asking you to provide me with some information that you have observed. This is very important and crucial to developing an evaluation that will help us in the next few years.

Would you please provide comments on the following areas.

Your comments about Block Scheduling.

for example :
-do you see fewer behavior problems, more or the same as before ?
-any differences in grades ?
-do you think you know your students better ?
-what about your curriculum/content ?
-any comments from students ?
-any comments from parents ?
-are you presently team-teaching with anyone else or developing interdisciplinary curriculum ?
-is there an increase/decrease in grades ? (ie. fewer f's, more a's?)
-do you see more or less homework ?
-are we assessing students in the most appropriate ways ?
-are staff development needs being met ?
-have your instructional methodoligies changed ? if so, how ?
-do opportunities exist for students who need more time to learn material ?
-are there other questions we should be asking as part of the evaluation ?

Your comments will be very helpful. THANK YOU in advance.

Please return to Bob Lister by **Friday September 12,1997**

_____
Teacher Name

STUDENT SURVEY
Block Scheduling

We are asking your help to evaluate Block Scheduling by providing us with feedback. Please circle your response and/or fill in the blanks on the following questions. Thank you for your help.

Dr. Lister

1. Because of Block scheduling, I feel I am learning more in each subject.

1. Not really 2. Somewhat 3. Yes 4. Definitely

2. Because of Block Scheduling, my teachers are using different instructional styles such as simulations, student presentations, special projects and other ways that help me learn the material better.

1. Not really 2. Somewhat 3, Yes 4. Definitely

3. I feel that I am doing better in school because I have 4 subjects at a time instead of 6.

1. Not Really 2. Somewhat 3. Yes 4. Definitely

4. Overall, I like Block scheduling.

1. Not really 2. Somewhat 3. Yes 4. Definitely

5. If you had to give Block scheduling a grade, what would it be ?

A A- B B- C C- D D- F Undecided

6 What do you like ***BEST*** about Block Scheduling ?

7. What do you like ***LEAST*** about Block Scheduling ?

BLOCK SCHEDULING

PARENT SURVEY

Portsmouth High School is beginning the third year of Block Scheduling and ask your help in providing information that will assist in the on-going evaluation. We realize that some parents have been involved with this schedule more than others, however, we are asking you to take a few minutes and respond to the following questions. Students and teachers are also being surveyed.

1. Block scheduling affords the opportunity to teach in greater depth. Has this been your experience with your child ?

2. Have you seen any changes in your child's grades, the amount of homework, or study habits that you can attribute to Block Scheduling ?

3. Have you observed any changes in your child's academic performance in response to the various instructional methods that teachers are using since we changed to a 90 minute period ?

4. Any additional comments ?

We appreciate your responses. Please return this survey to Dr. Lister's office by ***Wednesday October 1, 1997.*** We value your input. THANK YOU

Interview

Mr. Richard Gremlitz
Principal
Portsmouth High School
June 28, 1997

Mr. Gremlitz was interviewed by Bob Lister, Assistant Principal for the Status Report on Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School. The following is a summary of his comments as responses to questions concerning his observations of Block Scheduling, the new initiatives in place and the future of Block Scheduling on students, faculty and the high school community.

Mr. Gremlitz:

- "I have the strong sense that Block Scheduling is here to stay."
- "We must move out of the industrial mode of education."
- "This is really not much different from what elementary teachers have been doing, that is working with students for long periods of time to teach content and to apply the new skills."
- "We have what is very similar to a college model where students take classes for 90 minutes several times a week."
- "I personally feel that the breaks between classes and at lunch don't need to be so long."
- "We may need to look at the possibility of foreign languages having some type of year long block."
- "There should be an adequate amount of training available. Not all faculty have taken advantage of opportunities."
- "We have discussed the 30/30/30 rule for teachers to break up their lessons."
- "The district's Quality Educational Practices should be part of the instructional strategies."
- "It's very important for everyone to be on the same page with the process of change."
- "One parent has told me that Block Scheduling has placed too much stress on her son. I discovered that he had four academic classes in one quarter. We should look at ways to better balance student schedules."
- "One problem that comes up is students transferring to PHS from schools that do not have Block Scheduling. It is sometimes hard to schedule classes if they enter after the quarter begins and assigning course credit for work may be a problem."

- "I am more concerned with the curriculum piece than just credit."
- "The transition to Block Scheduling as I remember it was made more readily than I would have predicted."
- "I frequently hear from staff, breadth vs. depth. This is a concern and frustration for some staff."
- "We can now talk about high expectations for students. We talk more about Quality."
- "Few people (teachers) come to me saying they want to go back to the 7 period day."
- "I think there is more homework, I see more writing and reading to address the content issue."
- "We don't have enough resources for kids who can't cope and be successful like they can in other geographic areas in Magnet Schools, Technical Schools and in Performing Arts Schools."
- "I think the increased awareness of technology would have happened anyway."
- "What we have at center stage is the NHEAIP testing and the curriculum frameworks that are being developed to align the curriculum."
- "Block Scheduling is an experience for all of us."
- "My frustrations are:
    - Scheduling music groups. Maybe we can schedule music every other day. It cuts down on the number of band students. It happens to a lesser degree in choir and we have had to offer band after school".

Interview

Ms. Susan Anderson
Guidance Director
Portsmouth High School
June 18, 1997

Ms. Susan Orazi Anderson was interviewed by Bob Lister, Assistant Principal for this Status Report on Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School. The following is a summary of her remarks from questions concerning her observations and involvement with Block Scheduling.

Ms. Anderson:

- "We started talking about Block Scheduling two and a half years before it happened. That was in 1992-1993 and many of the faculty members were not supportive. In a sense they were forced to do it and change the way they teach. Teachers were asked what they needed. The next year the teachers didn't think it would happen. Money was set aside to get training, attend workshops, and work on curriculum issues. Math and foreign languages was of concern. Teachers visited Noble and Wells High Schools in Maine and other schools. Even guidance counselors had concerns about when during the day they would see students if they were required to be in all classes during a four period day with no study halls. We created a concept of Guidance Tuesday's and assigned students by alphabet. One counselor for all four years so they would get to know the students better. Counselors meet with the total group once a month or whenever necessary as a group to disseminate information. They meet students individually during the the 12 minute breaks and the 45 minute lunch."
- "For the 1997-1998 school year, it would be helpful to schedule social studies and English in alternate semesters. Seniors will have a future planning period to accomplish their "business. No classes will be scheduled during this time."
- "Students can focus on 4 classes and provides a different atmosphere in school. We offer so many one quarter classes that it is necessary to review students scheduled in July and August. I find teachers provide more of an academic rolle in the classes, and there is a calmer atmosphere. We need more electives."
- "In order for Block Scheduling to work, administrators need to be enthusiastic and supportive. The bar for teachers has been raised."
- "The content issue is a drawback. Teachers need to communicate and discuss this issue."
- "I recommend that we backplan to determine what we need to do to make a positive impact. The parents tell me that they don't see the amount of homework changing."

Interview

Mr. Gary Eastman
Science Department Chair
Portsmouth High School
June 3, 1997

Mr. Gary Eastman was interviewed by Bob Lister, Assistant Principal for the Status report on Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High school. The following is a summary of his comments to questions concerning his observations and participation in Block Scheduling.

Mr. Gary Eastman:

- "I have lots of problems scheduling labs for science classes and I don't feel that students come to me with the math background to do physics as they did in the past. I am teaching general quadratic equations in my physics class when the students should have had this in Algebra II before physics. This prevents me from teaching other things."
- "Labs used to be separate periods, now they are part of the 90 minute science classes. Teachers don't know their students well enough especially in chemistry and physics."
- "Block Scheduling is easier on teachers. Planning for 3 classes instead of 5. The science classes are very sequential. There is the content issue. It is very difficult to weed material out of the classes. Students don't get as far. Teachers eliminate content at the end. We have created more electives as a result."
- "Biology II has become Anatomy and Physiology."
- "In chemistry, I have had to cut out a section of the curriculum on nuclear and organic chemistry. We may want to offer a chemistry II to teach this material."
- "We need more staff to offer more electives. We are also using twice the amount of materials and the textbooks are getting double the amount of wear and tear."
- "We need a coordinated effort (team teaching) especially in physical science. There should also be a uniformity in physical science classes."
- "Many teachers work with students during the lunch break."
- "Class size needs to be reduced."
- "In response to how we can do what we do well with Block Scheduling, we need to:
    - Recognize the professional staff
    - Let the teachers develop curriculum
    - Improve the physical plant in size and appearance for more electives
    - Use the resources available, add staff, supplies and books

    - Give more flexibility
    - Don't be condescending/patronizing, people need re-training".
- "Teachers can't lecture for 90 minutes. It must be meaningful and stimulating."
- "It is difficult for Biology I students to stay on track. They should have 45 minutes of science and 45 minutes of math."
- "There are more opportunities to do more in class."
- "There seems to be a decrease in noise and distractions in the hallway."
- "In class for 90 minutes, I usually:
    - Lecture/activity/introduce a new concept
    - Activity may be physical
    - Bring the class together and re-cap material."
- "Kids have to know what is expected."
- "The budget may dictate how we educate kids."
- "We know how to teach, just give us the resources."
- "We need a place for disruptive students. Maybe a study hall type place for those who don't want to be in a particular class."
- "Substitutes are a weak link."

Interview

Ms. Barbara Fyles
Special Needs Department Co-Chair
Portsmouth High School
October 9,1997

Ms. Barbara Fyles was interviewed by Bob Lister, Assistant Principal for the Status Report on Block Scheduling at Portsmouth High School. The following is a summary of his comments to questions concerning her observations and participation in Block Scheduling.

Ms. Barbara Fyles:

- " Teachers have more time to meet and discuss student's needs. The staff and students do not seem so hurried."
- " Ninety minute Organizational Study classes allow for students to work more thoroughly through their content area assignments."
- " For some students, the ninety minute blocks require careful coordination of the teaching/learning style matches."
- " Many students were initially reluctant to try Block Scheduling. At this time, I don't know of a student who would go back to a seven-period per day schedule. Most feel it is easier to focus on four blocks rather than seven."
- " Block Scheduling offers time and opportunity for curriculum collaboration and in-service training."

Notes